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TO

HELEN

OF WHOSE HELP AND
ENCOURAGEMENT THIS
STORY IS THE OUTCOME

NOTE

THE characters in this story have been drawn entirely from imagination, and have no reference to any living personality.

PART I.

CHAPTER ONE.

I.

Jim Montgomery had often heard of Tollygunge as one of the gayest places in the world—its cheery race meetings, its excellent golf, its swimming parties, its Sunday morning breakfasts.

"It's like a perpetual May week," an old Cantab had told him not long before he had sailed for Calcutta; and he had expected great things of it.

The reality struck him as woefully inferior to the advertisement. Here he was at the first race meeting of the cold weather season—the actual date was Saturday, the first day of November 1957—and as near being bored as he had ever been in his life.

Where were the pretty frocks? Where were the sparkling women whose presence was supposed to make one dream for a moment that one was at Ascot? Where was the gaiety? One of the very few women there was sitting at his own luncheon table—exactly to his right, to be precise—and she was plain, angular, and at least forty years old.

As for the gaiety—if this was it, well, he had had a more cheery time swotting for the Tripos. Everybody spoke in subdued tones. The paddock seemed to attract few people. The Indian crowd which he had hoped he would find interesting was small, drab, and undistinguished. In a word, he was distinctly disappointed, and fed up.

His reflections were broken in upon by the voice of Mrs Carter, the angular woman on his right.

"There is that Colonel Hardy," she exclaimed. "In khaki, as usual. I do think it odd for a business man to masquerade as a soldier even at a race meeting. Why can't he dress like ordinary people?"

"Because he is not an ordinary man, my dear Mrs Carter," replied Edgar Trevor, her host; "and because times in India are out of joint."

"Yes, and they are going to get more disjointed," said old Bryn Edwards, who sat opposite her at the lunch table. "Have you booked your passage home, Mrs Carter?"

"No, why should I?"

"Because Calcutta has ceased to be a place for white women. I sent my wife and daughter away six months ago, and most people have done the same."

"I know that, of course, but I am not frightened, and if there is any danger I would prefer to share it with my husband."

"Admirable woman!" exclaimed Edgar Trevor. "But have you considered how your presence here may hamper him?"

"I don't see why it should."

"Well, take it this way. All business is practically at a standstill. Events are obviously moving towards a crisis. Every man of us is under arms, and may soon be under orders. At such a time a man doesn't want to have to worry about his womenfolk. Don't you think it would be an immense relief to your husband to know that you were safe in England at the present moment?"

Mrs Carter laughed nervously. "I confess I didn't expect to be lectured when I came to lunch this afternoon," she said. "And if things are as bad as you say, why did you invite me to Tollygunge?"

"Among other reasons, because you are probably safer here than alone in your own house on an afternoon like this with your husband away in the office," answered Trevor. "And I will go further, and tell you that the Committee decided to carry on with to-day's meet because it would afford us

an opportunity of testing public feeling—and it has. Look at the public stand—almost empty of Indians. Only the absolute old die-hard gamblers have come. Why have the rank and file stayed away? Because the boycott has reached the point when even the white man's race meetings are taboo."

Rather a rum conversation for a race meet lunch. So thought James Montgomery as he glanced from face to face at the party gathered round Edgar Trevor's table. Trevor was his *burra sahib*, the senior partner in Simpson & Co., East India merchants, whose office in Calcutta he had recently joined as an assistant. He was a big, pleasant-faced youngster of twenty-four, and had landed only a week before. What a long week it seemed!

He looked out from under the shamiana where they were lunching to the pleasant green of the Tollygunge lawns, and past them to the racecourse, the Club stand, and the public stand. In the paddock the horses were parading prior to the first race, but, as Trevor had remarked, the public stand, which was usually packed with Bengalis and Marwaris all agog with excitement and steeped to the eyes in the knowledge of 'form,' was comparatively empty. Instead of the white robes of the Bengalis, the brightly coloured head-dresses of the Marwaris, and the red fezzes of the Mohammedans, there were to be seen only a few dejected-looking Anglo-Indians, some of them in dirty white topees, a few dressed in an exaggeration of the fashion, but all of them uneasily conscious that there was something wrong.

Jim Montgomery was still sufficiently new to the country to revel in the brilliant light in which the scene was bathed. But for the dazzling sunlight, one could almost imagine oneself at a small race meeting at home—the greenness, the fragrance, the rusticity! All the same he felt the tenseness (of which he had become conscious the moment he sat

down to lunch) heightened by the conversational rally to which he had just listened. He glanced with increased interest at his host—a thin athletic-looking man of forty-five, with dark eyes, rather close set, a slight moustache, and a sleek head of black hair. Then at Mrs Carter—tall, meagre, with a pleasant enough whimsical face, greying fair hair, and light blue eyes. Then at Bryn Edwards ; but he was old—that described him.

Funny, too, how they had begun talking of the crisis. It seemed impossible to get away from it. He had heard about nothing else since his arrival. It looked as though the white man's place in India were being taken from him right and left. He knew things were pretty bad before he left London —he had been warned that the Indians were absolutely out of hand ; but he had never expected to be openly mocked at in the streets of Calcutta by little groups of Bengali students—and more than once he had been spat upon, or, at all events, spat at. Fortunately, the marksman had missed his aim. . . .

The last thing that had been said to him in London, and the first thing that had been impressed upon him on his arrival in Calcutta, was : " Never strike a native, no matter what the provocation." And he had observed great self-control accordingly. He perfectly understood the reason now for the numerous admonitions he had received.

Jim stood six feet one, weighed fourteen seven, and had captained the Cambridge fifteen. A blow from him would have killed the average Swarajist, and then—— ? A mock trial for murder before an Indian judge, a verdict of guilty from a jury which had not left the box, and a capital sentence which no Governor or Viceroy would dare to set aside for fear of the torrential vituperations of the Indian press.

That would be the result of an assault by an Englishman upon an Indian. But he knew that of recent years there had been repeated murders of British men and women in the districts—and that in no single instance had any Indian been convicted. The result was that English people were being literally driven in from the mofussil, and were taking refuge in the Presidency towns.

It was a queer state of things, and he was not surprised that the Europeans in Calcutta were arming and drilling daily—the Civil Guard, the Roughriders, the Caledonians, the Fencibles, and other corps. That reminded him—he must join the Roughriders on Monday. There were a number of them at the Races—in uniform, of course! Hardy, their Colonel, never allowed them to discard it.

II.

Trevor's lunch party sat through the first race, but before the second was run they had risen and made their way to the paddock.

"Thank God!" thought Jim, as he watched the graceful creatures parading. "Empires may come and empires may go, but the Turf goes on for ever."

"Well, what is your fancy, Montgomery?" said Trevor, coming up to him. "Racing and bridge are about the only things that pay nowadays. Business certainly doesn't—and won't for many a long day."

Jim duly put ten rupees upon the horse he liked best, and had the satisfaction, usually accorded to beginners, of seeing him win comfortably.

His luck was out after that, however, and losing some of his keenness for the 'Tote' he wandered about the lawns, or lounged in the Club stand looking at the people and trying to analyse the

uneasiness which seemed to pervade the entire company. Even the 'bookies' seemed subdued.

Then suddenly he realised how few women there were. A mere handful, and these by no means the youngest or the loveliest of their sex. He knew the reason, of course, but, by Jove! what a difference it made! How could a race meet be a success without ladies and their fluttering fineries? No wonder everything was so quiet! And then the humour of it struck him, and he could have laughed to see dozens of tea-tables unadorned by a single woman; only well-dressed men with binoculars slung over their shoulders, sitting and drinking tea in lugubrious male groups.

Two Roughriders passed him—a sergeant and a trooper; and then as he studied their equipment at close quarters—their chain shoulder-straps, their brown top-boots, their neat khaki outfit and the huge military helmets which protected them very effectively against the sun, but now in the fading light almost completely hid their faces — one of them—the shorter—swung round and held out his hand.

"Hullo, Montgomery! Ravenhill of Trinity."

"Hullo, Ravenhill!" cried Jim, wringing it. Ravenhill wasn't a Rugger man—indeed, played games very little,—and had gone down the year before him; but the sight of an old Cantab was especially welcome at a moment when he was beginning to be bored.

"Come and have some tea with us," said Ravenhill. "Jones, this is Montgomery, formerly Captain of Cambridge and Rugger International. Montgomery, Trooper Jones, a promising recruit to the Roughriders. By the way, how long have you been out?"

"Just a week," answered Jim.

"Oh, is that all?" They sat down, making an

additional male tea-table. Ravenhill called to one of the white-clad khitmutgars and ordered tea.

"Looks funny to see plain troopers swaggering about the lawns of the most exclusive Club in India," he said; "but the fact is, they have made all non-coms of the Roughriders honorary members, so long as we are under arms."

"And how long will that be?"

"God knows—probably a good long time. I say, Montgomery, have you joined up yet?"

"Well, I have received permission from Simpson & Co. to apply for the Roughriders on Monday."

"Good going! I'm glad you are not putting it off. We want as many men of your sort as we can rope in. We're frightfully particular, of course—that is, Colonel Hardy is,—and he selects or rejects every candidate himself."

"He seems to take his duties very seriously," commented Jim. "I heard a lady slanging him at lunch for coming to the races in uniform."

Ravenhill lit a cigarette. "Oh, these women!" he exclaimed. "How like a woman to slang the man to whom she may some day owe her life and honour!"

"Things are pretty bad, then?"

"Bad isn't the word, Montgomery. We are on a powder magazine. The whole country is seething with discontent and hatred towards the British, and the native regiments are on the point of mutiny. You remember, of course, that it is just a century since 1857. The Indians also remember it!"

"Then you seriously think that history is going to repeat itself?"

"Think, my dear fellow? I know—we all know—at least all of us in the Roughriders. You see, our Colonel doesn't treat us as mere automata. He tells us what is going on, and he knows more than any white man in Calcutta. We know that a

mutiny has been planned and is about to break out."

"Where?" asked Jim, impressed by the other's earnestness.

"Wherever there are native troops—here in Calcutta, Bankipore, Delhi, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Lahore. And wherever there are small groups of English people they will be murdered."

"What is the Government doing?"

"The trouble about a mutinous army," pointed out Ravenhill, "is that you can't do anything until it actually happens, and then it is too late."

Here he paused, for the khitmutgar was hovering over him with tea for three. He now laid the table and glided away. Ravenhill looked after him.

"These fellows are not supposed to know English," he murmured. "But you can't be too careful. Never talk politics when they are within earshot.

"Now about the crisis. You can't disband an army, or even a regiment, in anticipation of mutiny. No one could blame the Government for refusing to do it. But the blighters in Simla won't believe that there is going to be a mutiny, and are taking no measures whatever to lessen the shock or to protect British lives. The result will be that when it does come, it will be at least as frightful as the outbreak of a century ago."

Jim sat in stunned silence. How queer to see himself and others drinking tea on this delightful afternoon and on this lovely lawn, while within four miles of them a mutinous soldiery might even now be murdering English folk in the streets of Calcutta!

But, after all, had not many of the supreme catastrophes of history broken in upon junketings?

"Calcutta, I suppose, is pretty safe," he said, rousing himself.

"Absolutely," was Ravenhill's reply. "Thanks

to Hardy and the system he has perfected. In ten minutes fifty of our troopers can parade at headquarters. In half an hour the entire corps can be mobilised and move into action. The other units are possibly less hair-trained, but they have all been keyed up, and in an hour you can have between 3000 and 4000 British and Anglo-Indian volunteers under arms and ready for anything."

Jim was impressed in spite of himself by the calm confidence with which this was said.

"Hardy is the brains of the volunteer movement?" he queried.

Ravenhill's face glowed. "He is the brains and the heart of it," he replied. "He is the finest man in India to-day; and before long India will know it."

"Say, sergeant," drawled a voice behind him, "have you room for a lonely man at your table?"

"Roll right up, Simmonds," answered Ravenhill, turning round and half rising; and a long-limbed, neatly dressed youth in mufti came round behind Jim and drew in a chair. He was clean-shaven, and good-looking in the American way.

"Mr Simmonds, United States Vice-Consul, Trooper Jones, Mr Montgomery," said Ravenhill, with a wave to the others. "Khitmutgar *aur ek piyala lao*. Sit down, Simmonds. Business is so bad that one welcomes a chance of converting another American to the tea-drinking habit. Anything new?"

"Not exactly new," answered the Consul. "But there is confirmation of the story we handed to your Colonel a few days ago. Three of our missionaries have arrived in Calcutta from an out-of-the-way village with an unpronounceable name in the district of Moradabad; and they have seen the little cakes we spoke of."

"You spoke to them yourself?" asked Ravenhill, his face lighting up.

" Yes, sir."

" How many cakes did they see ? "

" One at a time, they informed me ; but they saw them in more than one village."

" Simmonds ! " cried Ravenhill. " This is tremendously important. Have you passed the news on to Hardy ? "

" Well, no, sergeant. You see, we can only act in our official capacity. We are hardly noos agencies for Colonel Hardy or anyone else. But if a citizen applies to us for information, why, nat'rally we are very willin' to hand him any facts that have come to our knowledge."

" Well, here's your tea, and see that it doesn't go to that cool head of yours," said Ravenhill. " But as soon as you've drunk it I want you as a favour to buttonhole the Colonel and tell him all about the chuppaties, the drum-beats, and every other point the missionaries have handed you. Has the drum-beating been constant ? "

" Con-tinual, they tell me—all over the country as far as their range extends."

" Did they describe the beat ? "

" Vurry simple—rhythmic—as if they were using Morse."

" This exactly confirms all our information," said Ravenhill. " Montgomery, you are only just in time. We shall be at grips with rebellion within three weeks at the most—possibly within one week."

He rose to his feet and gazed intently towards a far corner of the lawn. " No good just now," he muttered. " The old man is still busy with the Sultan."

At the very edge of the lawn Jim now noticed two men sitting at a tea-table together and talking with unusual earnestness. One was in khaki uniform, and Jim felt pretty certain that this must be Colonel

Hardy, the Commandant of the famous Calcutta Roughriders—the best corps of Light Horse in India, or possibly in the world. He had heard of him ever since he landed.

He now knew that he would have to go before him on Monday ere he could be admitted to the Corps. From his present vantage point he scanned his future Commanding Officer keenly. The figure was that of an eminently soldierly man in the prime of life—tall, with square shoulders, and no superfluous flesh. The features under the peaked cap were sharply cut, with shaven upper lip, aquiline nose, and square, aggressive chin. Jim could not see the eyes, but put them down constructively as hard and grey. At the moment he was evidently listening to his companion intently, and his face was like a mask.

Then Jim turned his attention to the Colonel's *vis-à-vis*. Another uncommon sort of fellow, he decided—on a second glance an Indian, but totally different from any Indian he had yet encountered. Tall, almost as long as the Colonel, but slighter—in a conventional lounge suit of fawn tweed. His hat lay on the grass at his side. Jim caught a glimpse of him in partial silhouette, and admired his air of aristocratic neatness. From his well-groomed head to his faultlessly shod feet he was absolutely correct. His profile showed a mobile handsome face with a trim moustache. The face was fleshy compared to the lean outline of Colonel Hardy's features, but very far from gross. His complexion was a clear olive, and his eyes slanted slightly, imparting a faint suggestion of the Mongol to his pleasant face. If Colonel Hardy was silent at the moment, his companion was evidently talking for two.

Jim looked at them for several minutes, and then they rose as if to cross the lawn. The moment they

did so, Ravenhill started to his feet and motioned to Simmonds to accompany him. But the Vice-Consul sat still.

"No, sergeant," he said. "I'm not a reporter or a newsagent. If Colonel wants information he can come to me. The consulate ain't goin' to take sides."

With a gesture of impatience Ravenhill left the table and marched up to his Colonel. He saluted, and the Sultan, who was abreast of Hardy, fell back a pace, while Ravenhill repeated what he had just heard. Watching the three, Jim saw Hardy turn to the Sultan: another salute from Ravenhill and the Sultan evidently came into the colloquy. Feeling that he had seen enough, Jim turned away in search of Trevor's party.

III.

He found his *burra sahib* with Bryn Edwards, giving tea to Mrs Carter, and was bidden to sit down with them.

During a pause in the conversation he mentioned the news brought by Simmonds, and described its effect on Ravenhill. Bryn Edwards and Trevor looked at each other.

"Getting down to the bone, aren't we?" said Trevor.

"Yes," the older man assented. "I wonder if this will force Hardy's hand?"

"Either that, or the farce in the Legislative Council," answered Trevor.

"Or our sapient Governor, or the Viceroy, or the next anti-British outrage," Bryn Edwards went on. "A hundred things may force his hand, but from what I know of him I doubt whether anything will. He will move when he is ready, and not before; but if he requires a pretext, any of these incidents will furnish him with one."

"Hardy requires no pretext," said Trevor with conviction. "What he does he will do openly."

Jim listened to all this somewhat mystified. Both men spoke as if something were going to happen—something for which Hardy would be responsible, but which they entirely approved.

He voiced his curiosity to Bryn Edwards, and the old man gave him a startled look, but no reply. Then Trevor spoke.

"My dear Montgomery," he said, "all sorts of things may happen, as Mr Bryn Edwards says, and all that Colonel Hardy—and the rest of us for that matter—is doing is to be ready for any emergency. As Colonel of the Roughriders and as the leader of the entire volunteer army, he doubtless has definite plans for certain emergencies, and if you join the corps—as I understand you propose to do on Monday—you will probably get the hang of these plans. But in the meantime I don't think it is either necessary or desirable to discuss them."

It was getting dark now, with the early falling Indian night. The last race had been run half an hour before. The meagre attendance of the public had melted away, and the only people remaining on the Tollygunge lawns were the members of the Club and their friends. Lights began to appear on the little tables at which tea was being served; and it became more difficult to distinguish faces. It was easier, however, to pick out figures, and Mrs Carter, who had been an interested listener, now joined in the conversation.

"Here is Colonel Hardy," she said in a low voice, "and the Sultan of Jehanabad with him."

The party looked up eagerly and watched the two tall figures as Hardy escorted the Sultan to his car.

"Hullo!" said Trevor. "Are they going off together?"

His question was answered almost immediately in the negative. Hardy saw His Highness into a big official limousine, and then turned away in the direction of the garage.

"Well," said Bryn Edwards, "I wonder what the outcome of that confab is going to be?"

"I daresay to-morrow's interview with the Viceroy will show," replied Trevor.

"Why, what is going to happen to-morrow?" Mrs Carter inquired.

"Something rather important," answered Trevor. "You know the Viceroy arrived in Calcutta to-day. He is passing through on his way to Burmah, but is breaking his journey for a day in order to browbeat Jehanabad into obeying a resolution of the Assembly."

"Browbeat Jehanabad!" repeated Mrs Carter. "What an extraordinary idea!"

"The times are out of joint," Trevor reminded her, "and all kinds of mad things are being done; but of all the idiotic things the Government of India has been let in for, this business of Jehanabad is the most ineffable."

"May one know what it is, sir?" asked Jim.

"Oh, yes, everybody knows—although nobody is supposed to," said his employer. "The fact is, the Sultan of Jehanabad is the greatest Prince in India—and incidentally the best. He believes in governing his State, and is almost fanatically loyal to the British connection. A few months ago a Bengali agitator went to Jehanabad and began to spout sedition. The Sultan instantly deported him. Whereupon Mr Agitator goes up to Delhi and earwigs the leaders of the Assembly, who are, of course, anti-British and command an enormous majority. The upshot is that the Assembly passes a resolution calling upon the Sultan to readmit Hari Charan Ghosh, or whatever his name is, to his dominions

and allow him to spout sedition to his heart's content."

"But surely the Viceroy isn't going to force that down his throat?" asked Jim.

"That is precisely what His Excellency is going to do to-morrow," replied Trevor.

"But isn't that interfering with a native State?" asked Jim, who had been reading Locksby's 'Indian Constitution, 1953.'

"Of course it is, and that's just where the madness of it comes in. The Viceroy, of course, is not a free agent in the matter."

"The Labour Government at home?"

"You've hit it, my son. Grafton and his precious Cabinet have jumped in and insisted that Jehanabad shall eat humble pie. And poor Lord Quantock, who can't call his soul his own, has taken his orders from London, and is going to pass them on to the Sultan to-morrow."

"And do you think," asked Mrs Carter, "that the Sultan will carry them out?"

"You had better ask Colonel Hardy about that," Bryn Edwards struck in. "If anyone knows what H.E.H. will do, it is John Hardy."

"I expect there is one other person who knows all about it," rejoined the lady, "and that is Princess Roshanara."

"The Sultan's sister?"

"Yes; you remember she came up with him last cold weather for the Viceroy's Cup. What a brilliant creature she is!"

"And as brainy as she is good-looking," commented Bryn Edwards. "They say he does nothing without consulting her. I suppose she isn't with him just now?"

"No," replied Trevor; "he flew from Jehanabad, arriving in Calcutta last night. It was really a *hukum* (order) from the Viceroy, and, of course,

the Princess wasn't invited. A pity she wasn't. The Viceroy wouldn't have stood a chance with her."

"Is she younger or older than her brother?" asked Jim. He was frightfully interested, but didn't like to ask the age of the Princess outright.

Mrs Carter smiled approvingly. She had great sympathy with the young.

"She is nearly twenty-five," she said, "and the most wonderful woman you ever saw—dazzlingly beautiful, brilliantly clever,—and what is more, still unmarried."

"Isn't that rather unusual for an Indian lady?" asked Jim.

"Oh, Indian women don't marry nearly so early as they used to," Mrs Carter replied; "but even so I admit that twenty-five is an unusual age for a Princess—and such a Princess—to be unmarried. But Roshanara is unique. She was educated privately in England at the same time that her brother was at Eton and Oxford, and she is absolutely English in her outlook. I'm not surprised that she has not as yet found an Indian prince or nobleman to suit her. An Englishman, yes—but oh, these mixed marriages!"

"I quite agree with you about them as a general rule," said Bryn Edwards, "but Roshanara is a very special case."

CHAPTER TWO.

I.

The next morning, Sunday, found His Excellency the Earl of Quantock, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, in a mood which was far from pleasant. For several reasons. First, Calcutta at the end of October was twenty-five degrees hotter than Simla. Second, he was embarking for Burmah on the morrow, and the prognostications of the weather at sea were not favourable. Third, he loathed and shrank from the task which had been imposed upon him with respect to the Sultan of Jehanabad and the agitator, Harish Chunder Chatterjee. Fourth, the state of things in Bengal was distinctly troublesome, and that bore, Sir James Bowles, the Governor, was to see him immediately after his inevitably trying interview with the Sultan. Fifth, he had cut his chin shaving.

For these reasons, among others, Lord Quantock frowned to himself as he looked out from his sanctum down the lawns and glades of Belvedere.

The Calcutta residence of the Viceroy of India in 1957 was a palace situated at the centre of the approaches to the suburb of Alipore. Its grounds were limited, but beautifully laid out. Its great drawback was that it stood at the confluence of two main roads, and was thus open to the noise of unseen motor traffic. There were few more spacious lawns in India than that upon which Lord Quantock now gazed, somewhat gloomily. Wide and gently sloping, it described a gracious sweep, bounded by trees which in the distance suggested an English park rather than a suburb of Calcutta.

The Viceroy of India in the critical year 1957

was a small spare man of sixty, with weak well-bred features surmounted by a high narrow forehead almost completely bald. He looked younger than his actual age—due possibly to the fact that his moustache and the little hair left to him were untouched with grey. He had a humorous mouth, hazel eyes, and, when he chose to display it, a disarming smile. He typified the depths to which it is possible for an old and impoverished *noblesse* to sink. He had no money, and sufficiently few principles to jump at the Viceroyalty when it was offered to him by Mr Grafton, the Labour Prime Minister, on conditions the chief of which was that he should regard himself as the paid servant of the British Cabinet ; that he should carry out implicitly every instruction conveyed to him through the India Office ; and particularly that he should help on the Indian and keep the white man relentlessly in his place. His term of office was for five years, two of which had already expired—irksome and humiliating years during which he had been compelled to lend himself repeatedly to policies and actions which at heart he hated. He had made one or two efforts to assert himself in opposition to arbitrary and, as he felt, foolish orders sent out from home ; but the whip had immediately been cracked and the orders had been reiterated, with insolent reminders that he could very easily be replaced. He had given in time and again, but found his position more and more distasteful, and had begun to wonder almost daily whether it was worth while.

Of all the disagreeable tasks which had been set him, that which lay immediately before him was the most repugnant. He liked and admired the Sultan of Jehanabad, and privately sympathised with him in the drastic action he had taken with regard to Harish Chunder Chatterjee. Moreover,

he had acted strictly within his rights. But the summary expulsion of the Bengali agitator from his dominions had roused the Labour Government in London as well as the seditious Assembly at Delhi, and he (Lord Quantock) had received his orders to force the Sultan to defer to the impertinent resolution which the Assembly had passed. What would be the end of it? He shrugged his shoulders with a fatalism which he had learned long before he came to India.

II.

Eleven o'clock struck, and immediately afterwards Charteris, the Private Secretary, knocked at his door and entered. The Viceroy turned from his gloomy contemplation of the landscape.

"His Excellent Highness the Sultan is here, Sir. Shall I bring him in?"

In response to a nod from His Excellency he withdrew for a moment and then returned, accompanied by the Sultan.

The person of Sir Zahir-ud-din Mohamed, Sultan of Jehanabad, has already been described. It was now set off by faultless morning dress, with the star of the G.C.S.I. glittering upon the left breast. The clean, vigorous line of the face and figure suggested an English notable: the Oriental touch was supplied by the close-fitting turban, with a blazing jewel holding aloft a heron's plume, which covered his head, to mark the formal character of his visit. He bowed, and the two men shook hands.

"Ah, good morning, Sultan Sahib," said the Viceroy. "Too good of you to have flown from Jehanabad specially to see me. Sit down and let us smoke."

The Sultan helped himself, with thanks, to the Viceroy's cigarettes, and His Excellency followed suit. The two men sat nearly opposite each other,

the Viceroy with his back to the light, the Sultan facing it as he sat to the side of the large writing-table.

The talk for some time was on general subjects—upon the chances of the Sultan's horse Blue Boy winning the Viceroy's Cup; the Madrassa, or College, which was building at Jehanabad; the accommodation at Hastings House, where His Highness was staying. Lord Quantock was fencing for an opening; the Sultan, perfectly aware of this, was in no mood to offer him one.

At last the Viceroy, impatient to get it over, delivered a frontal attack.

"Sultan," he said, lighting another cigarette, "are you going to be reasonable?"

The Sultan's white teeth showed in a boyish grin.

"Your Excellency means—about Chatterjee?"

"I do."

"Of course I am going to be reasonable. I have never been anything else. I mean to keep him out of my State so long as I am the ruler of it."

"Come, Sultan," replied His Excellency with some testiness, "you know I can't possibly take that for an answer."

"But, good heavens, Your Excellency," pursued the Sultan, "what do you or your Government stand to gain by this frightful humiliation? Here is a poisonous Bengali who is up to the neck in Communism and revolutionary intrigue. You know the mischief he has done in British India: you know he has had a share in stirring up bad blood, fomenting sedition, and actually in disorders which have cost the lives of English men and women. He ought to have been hanged years ago. Having done all the damage he could in your dominions, he comes into mine in order to repeat the performance. I, not being troubled with an Assembly or a seditious press, make use of my ordinary powers and deport

him without giving him a chance to make mischief in my State. What on earth is wrong with that action ? "

Lord Quantock smiled not unpleasantly. It was a disarming smile—one of his chief assets.

" You forget," he said, " the way your police handled him."

An answering smile flickered across the handsome face opposite him.

" I admit, of course, that they handled him a bit roughly. But he called my chief of police his brother-in-law—as you know the deadliest insult that one Indian can offer another. Wasn't that asking for trouble ? And anyhow, Sir, I think you must admit the fellow deserved every whack he got—and a good deal more ? "

" Doubtless ; but I am not here to discuss my views on the subject. The point is that the wretch has become a martyr, and British India, politically speaking, is on its hind-legs protesting against your action in the matter. And now the Assembly has passed a resolution requiring me to call upon you to readmit Harish Chunder to your dominions——"

" Damn the Assembly ! Forgive me, Sir. But what business is it of theirs ? "

" None at all, so far as I can see. But, Sultan, that is not the worst. You know we have a Labour Government at home ? "

" I know Mr Grafton is a Socialist, and that he is out to ' make the Empire safe for democracy.' "

" Oh, then you do read his speeches. Well, he is not only a showy politician and a speaker of tremendous eloquence, but also the most pig-headed bounder in England. And it is he who is now insisting that the resolution of the Assembly shall be implemented, and that you shall not only receive Harish Chunder back into your State, but shall give him *carte blanche* to carry on as he likes there."

" Your Excellency, this is stark madness. I am not thinking for the moment of the intolerable position it would put me in, or of the tremendous mischief it would make with the whole Chamber of Princes. I am thinking mainly of its effect upon the British Raj. You know quite well that British prestige has been steadily going down during the past few years. You know that sedition is coming almost into the open, and that the bazaars are humming with disquieting rumours. You know, too, that the British Army is at its lowest point of weakness, and that India is threatened by enemies without as well as by traitors within. What do you think, Sir, will be the result of such kow-towing to the very worst elements in British India by humiliating and antagonising—yes, Sir, antagonising—the whole of the independent princes in the person of me, who am, I suppose, the most influential amongst them ? "

There was a pause after the Sultan's outburst. To tell the truth, His Excellency was considerably embarrassed. All the more so because he himself had already represented matters to the home Government in terms very similar to those which the Sultan had just employed. At the previous week-end he had held a long discussion with the Secretary of State for India on the long-distance telephone, and had spoken to him on the subject as plainly as he dared. And the result ? An unmannerly rap over the knuckles from the Secretary of State, who had jeered at him for an alarmist, and had told him that Mr Grafton was determined at all costs to " make the Sultan eat humble pie."

" If Your Excellency," he had drily added, " is not prepared to see this business through, there are plenty of men who are." At once an insult and a threat, challenging him to resign, while perfectly confident that he neither would nor could.

" I can quite understand how Your Highness feels about it," he said, " but I'm afraid that will not help us. The fact is, Mr Grafton has made up his mind on the subject, and the Secretary of State has passed definite orders that you must either bow to the expressed wish of the Assembly or—well, abdicate."

" Bow to the Assembly or abdicate ! I shall do neither the one thing nor the other."

The Viceroy shrugged his shoulders. " My dear fellow, what is the use of these heroics ? It is rough on you, I admit—as a matter of fact, I feel it is pretty rough on me to have to force you in this manner. But nothing that you or I can do will affect the issue. It is futile to resist a Communist Government in London which is bent on a Communist revolution in India. It holds all the trumps."

" It would hold one less, Sir, if the Viceroy resigned rather than carry out its policy."

" Possibly, but frankly, I am not prepared to resign ; and if I did, they would simply send out someone who was definitely pledged to down you. Honestly, Sultan, I don't see how you are going to get out of it except by compliance, disagreeable as it is."

" I can force the Government of India to depose me."

" Don't imagine, my dear Sultan, that that would do you any good. Grafton leads the women voters of Great Britain by the ear—literally by the ear, because he is a wonderful talker. He would stick at nothing to make out a case for himself and against you, and he would nobble the press at his end ; and as for the Government of India, you know well enough that, weak as it is where sedition and Communism are concerned, it is still strong enough to coerce the most powerful of native rulers who should stand up against it."

" That," rejoined the Sultan, flushing a dark red, " remains to be proved. I am not a mere vassal of the Indian Government. I am an ally of His Majesty the King-Emperor."

" A pure fiction, my dear fellow, as you would very speedily find out if you put it to the test. As a matter of fact, there are many people in India and at home who would like nothing better than to have it put to the test, just because you are the greatest prince in India and because your downfall, they think, would encourage the others."

" My downfall, Your Excellency ! What exactly do you mean ? "

" I mean your deposition, your removal from the *guddi* for reasons of State. Possession, remember, is nine points of the law ; and once you had lost your *guddi*, you would be amazed at the way in which you would be ignored. You would simply become a man with a grievance—an unforgiveable offence in England. The Government of India could easily make out a case for dethroning you, and it would have the last word with the British public."

" And India ? "

" India, my dear Sultan — that is, our India, British India,—would dance with joy to know that it had got rid of you for good. The native press would suddenly discover that I was a heaven-sent Viceroy—a Daniel come to judgment. I should be lionised and garlanded, and instead of being boycotted when I come down to Calcutta—as I was some months ago,—the politicians would give garden parties in my honour, and I should have them fawning on me—till the next time, damn them ! "

If the Viceroy had been looking at his companion instead of gazing out of the window, he would have seen a sudden stiffening in the Sultan's figure and a hard glitter in his eye.

" Let us get right down to this," he said, in a

tone which made His Excellency look up. " I have deported the Bengali seditionist, Harish Chunder Chatterjee, from my State for reasons which seemed to me sufficient, and in exercise of my legal powers under Treaty rights. Was I right or wrong to do so ? "

The Viceroy once more shrugged his shoulders. " Speaking personally, Sultan, I should say you were right. Officially, of course, I am not at liberty to admit it."

" Very good ; and for doing a thing which you unofficially admit was right and which was also legal, I have been publicly brought to book by the Assembly, which consists almost entirely of people who are hostile to British rule."

" Yes, I suppose you are right there too."

" This seditious Assembly has further demanded that I shall be publicly humiliated by retracting my deportation order and actually welcoming this scoundrel back to my dominions ? "

" Yes, that is so."

" Lastly, you tell me that unless I eat humble pie and defer to the Assembly, I shall be deposed ? "

" Yes, Sultan, that is what it comes to—much to my personal regret."

" Then you, the Viceroy of India, the representative of British law and order, are actually prepared to aid the forces of destruction and to humiliate and persecute a ruler who has only done what you would like to do if you could ? "

The Viceroy moved uneasily. " I wish you would remember the kind of Government we have at home," he protested. " It isn't I who am doing this. It is Grafton and his Labour gang. I am fully conscious of the folly of it—madness, I think you called it, and I think you were perfectly right."

The Sultan went on talking rather to himself than to Lord Quantock.

" Someone must obviously make a stand, other-

wise the Empire can't last. The question really is —must it be Your Excellency or myself ? "

" My reply is—why should it be either ? I have often found, Sultan, that if one does nothing, the problem solves itself. You remember the lines about the East bowing low before the West ? There really is a lot in them. Why not put them into practice ? It's infinitely annoying that it should be so, but if you resist this pig-headed Government at the present moment, you will get broken to a certainty. If you give in—or appear to give in,—you will outlive this Government and will retain your kingdom with all its opportunities of power and usefulness ; and when Grafton & Co. disappear—as I fully expect they will after the next election,—you will be in a position to get all your own back, and possibly a good deal more."

The Sultan rose to his feet—a tremendous breach of etiquette, but what did he care ?

" Then, Sir," he retorted, his eyes flashing ominously, " I must ask you to inform the Secretary of State that I refuse, once and for all, to humiliate myself by discussing this matter any further. I refuse to readmit this man to my dominions. I decline to obey an Assembly of Baboos. I stand on my Treaty rights, and I will appeal to the Crown over the heads, if necessary, of Your Excellency and the Secretary of State. Moreover, I decline to abdicate ; and if your Government and Mr Grafton wish to depose me, you will have to come to Jehanabad and do it by main force."

He turned on his heel and was about to go, when he swung back upon the amazed Viceroy.

" Let me say this, Sir. I am not a rebel against Britain. For the Crown and Empire I would shed the last drop of my blood. But I have finished with the Government of India. If I live and retain my throne, I will own allegiance only to the King-

Emperor. I will have no more dealings with a Viceroy who is a mere tool in the hands of Socialists, wind-bags, and traitors. Good morning to Your Excellency."

Without another word he strode to the door and passed out, exchanging a curt farewell with the startled Private Secretary. Seeing that something had gone wrong Charteris hurried into the Viceroy's room, and found him sitting, pale, and hunched up in his chair.

"Charteris!" he murmured, "can you, like a good fellow, get me a glass of brandy?"

III.

"The Sultan seems to have cut up very rough," said Charteris, after complying with Lord Quantock's request.

"I am afraid my nerves are not what they were," was the reply. "Yes, he has cut up extraordinarily rough. He has refused point blank to obey orders, called me a tool of traitors and windbags, and invited the entire might of the British Empire to Jehanabad, where we were to have the pleasure of turning him out by main force. Then he rushed out."

"I say, Sir, this is serious," exclaimed the Private Secretary. "He must have the other States, or the majority of them, behind him, or he wouldn't dare to talk like that."

"Does it follow?" asked the Viceroy wearily. "After all, the demands I had to make on him were so monstrous as to make any self-respecting man see red."

"Well, what is going to be done about it?" inquired Charteris. "We can't allow him to flout the Viceroy in this manner. Depend upon it, the story will get about with various embellishments—

and then there is the terrible risk of other States following his example."

"I propose to do nothing in the meantime," His Excellency replied. "For the loss of his temper there is excellent excuse. He may think better of it and come back."

"Not if I know him, Sir," Charteris interrupted.

"You are probably right. But even if he intends to rebel we must go warily, else we may bring the whole of the independent States about our ears. I will give you a note of to-day's incident, which you had better wire in code to Sir William Brandon,[1] asking him to be so good as to examine it with reference to the present situation. Ask him to let me have his considered views in Rangoon. Where is the Commander-in-Chief?"

"Still in Lahore, Sir, confined to his room with gout."

"Soldiers are rather like policemen, aren't they? Always out of the way when they are most likely to be wanted. Well, we had better not aggravate his gout by telling him anything about it just now. When was Sir James Bowles due to see me?"

"At half-past twelve, Your Excellency. It is now a quarter past."

"I am ready to see him as soon as he comes. But I wish I could have put him off. To be honest, Charteris, that turn-up with Jehanabad has made me feel quite shaky. Imagine the Viceroy being called the tool of traitors by the first Prince in India!"

"The man must have been mad," said the politic Private Secretary.

"Not so mad as the triple fools in London who whipped me on to bait him—nor, for that matter, as I am, to have lent myself to it. I am afraid we have stirred up a hornet's nest between us."

[1] Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.

Charteris retired to his own room adjoining, and Lord Quantock was left once more to his own meditations. If they had been disagreeable before the interview, they were still more so now. The Viceroy was weak, but he was not a fool. The unworthy part he had been made to play during the past two years had gnawed at his conscience, and had driven him to cynicism as an anodyne. He fell back on it now as he looked at his watch, and heard the bodyguard presenting arms to the Governor of Bengal.

It afforded Lord Quantock a grim amusement to think how closely Sir James Bowles' position resembled his own. Both had come out to India as nominees and factotums of the Labour Dictator in England. But there was this difference between them—that while the Viceroy was conscious of his moral serfdom and chafed under it, the pompous little Governor, who was the son of a wealthy tradesman in the Midlands and had been bred to purely local politics, gloried in what he conceived to be the "mighty task of enfranchising the Indian people." Lord Quantock again fell back on his cynical mood as he rose to welcome Sir James Bowles.

"His Excellency the Governor of Bengal." With these words Charteris shepherded in Sir James Bowles, and then left the two Excellencies to themselves.

Sir James Bowles was a stout little man rising fifty. He had little hair on his head and none on his face, which was pale, fleshy, and undistinguished. His eyes were a light blue, and his mouth had a pursed-up expression, the effect of which was distinctly serio-comic. He himself, however, was totally destitute of humour. One result of this lack was that he had fallen an immediate and unresisting victim to the wily Bengali politicians, who were already talking of raising a statue to him as

' The Liberator '—and in the meantime were turning him round their little finger. Of this the Viceroy was well aware.

The Governor was attired, like the Sultan, in morning dress, with the Star of India on his breast. His greeting was stiff and formal; the Viceroy's was almost genial. Sir James Bowles was certainly a much less formidable proposition than the Sultan.

" Well, Governor, and how is Bengal behaving itself ? " asked the Viceroy after the usual preliminaries.

" There is nothing the matter with Bengal, Your Excellency," answered the Governor, " except it be the total cessation of business."

" Ah ! The same old story. And what is the reason of that ? "

" Why, Sir," the Governor replied, as if he were repeating a lesson, " it is very much what might have been expected. India is suffering from growing pains. She is in a period of transition—one might almost describe it as a revolutionary epoch. She is entering into her heritage of freedom; and I feel that I am very fortunate—and so I have no doubt does Your Excellency—that you and I should have been chosen to guide her to her great destiny."

" That remains to be seen," said the Viceroy. " But why should India have to sacrifice her trade in order to gain her liberty ? "

" I was coming to that," said Sir James. " You see, things are never normal in an age of transition. All kinds of antagonisms are created, all sorts of fears arise——"

" And all sorts of crimes are being committed in Bengal, aren't they ? " Lord Quantock interrupted.

" Er—yes, I am afraid they are; and no one regrets them more than myself and the Nationalist leaders—with whom by the way I am in constant touch, and whose entire confidence I enjoy."

"But, Sir James, regrets are somewhat futile when English people are being murdered almost every day in Bengal. I am told that hundreds of Europeans have had to flee from the country districts, and either return to England or take refuge in Calcutta."

"Yes, they have," assented the Governor; "and I wish they wouldn't. They have aggravated a problem which has become so serious that I have asked for this interview in order to consult Your Excellency upon it. The responsibility is mine, of course, but two heads are better than one, and besides, you, like myself, are working for the complete emancipation of India from the bonds of servitude to the Empire."

"I see; and so you are making a beginning with the murderers of Bengal?"

"By no means, Your Excellency. I wish you could hear how Mr Koilash Ghose and the other leaders denounce these cowardly outrages."

"I can quite imagine them. But what is your problem?"

"It is peculiar to Calcutta, and it has been aggravated, as I say, by the presence of several hundred English refugees from the mofussil districts. It is also a consequence of the slackness of trade, which is inseparable from a time of civil commotion.

"Your Excellency, the English in Calcutta (a term in which I include the Scotch, though why I hardly know, as the Scotch are, if anything, more numerous) are armed to the teeth. There are half a dozen or more local auxiliary corps of volunteers, and each of them has been swollen to double its strength. Moreover, having nothing else to do, the young merchants and tradesmen in the place, reinforced by the refugees from the mofussil, are being drilled in these bodies every day and all day long. The maidan is like an armed camp, and there is

scarcely any room for ordinary peaceful citizens to go about their lawful occasions."

"By which you mean, I take it, that the Bengali orator is apt to be interrupted when he begins to harangue his fellow-citizens?"

"Not exactly that, Your Excellency. The Bengali orator prefers Beadon Square as a forum for his eloquence. But as a matter of fact it is the Bengali citizen who is being inconvenienced. He plays football and cricket on the maidan, or he takes the air on it, and he is being elbowed off it by these military activities."

"But this is an age of transition, Governor. The Bengalis must be prepared to put up with a little inconvenience—just as the Europeans are having to."

"But there is more in it than that," said the Governor, lowering his voice. "It isn't merely a case of drilling or playing at soldiers. These men are not only armed, but organised."

"Indeed; and who are the ringleaders of the conspiracy?"

"To speak of ringleaders would hardly be correct. There is one leader who, I am informed, has absolute power, and in whom not only the armed volunteers but the entire European community have complete confidence. His name is John Hardy, and he commands the *corps d'élite*, the Roughriders, as they are called—the only mounted corps in Calcutta. Hardy is unquestionably a man of great ability and determination. He is a consulting engineer by profession, but has closed his office, and now devotes himself entirely to the Roughriders—and to some scheme or schemes involving the organisation of the British in Calcutta on a military basis. I don't like it, Your Excellency. It looks like that impossible situation —*imperium in imperio*."

"An intriguing situation, Governor—and what do you propose to do about it?"

" My first step was to approach the General Commanding at the Fort. I pointed out the anomaly of what was practically a standing army encamped in Calcutta in time of peace."

" Rather a Pickwickian peace, Sir James."

" Well, Sir, it seemed to me that this state of things should not continue, and I pressed General Stewart very strongly to issue orders limiting these drilling activities to one day, or at the most two days, a week, and to certain hours in the day. His reply was a pointed negative. He added that in his opinion it was a damned good thing, and that it kept these thousands of idle Europeans out of mischief."

" Apropos," asked the Viceroy, " what is their discipline like ? "

" Practically perfect," was the almost regretful reply. " They give one absolutely no handle. Hardy rules his Roughriders as Cromwell did the Ironsides. He is, I gather, a strongly religious man, and the spirit pervading his corps is remarkable, and sets the tone to all the other bodies. Only once has one of the men misbehaved. Hardy had him out of the corps and out of the country in twenty-four hours."

" The problem grows more and more interesting, Governor—almost a stalemate."

" Not quite," replied Sir James, his fat face registering extreme knowingness. " Your Excellency must remember, on the one hand, that I am directly in touch with the Secretary of State ; on the other hand, the closeness of my relations with the Bengali Nationalists. Now between us we have devised a means of clipping Hardy's wings, for I am pretty certain that if we can tie him up the whole movement will collapse—the Europeans in Calcutta have no more cohesion without a leader than a flock of sheep."

" You seem to have learned a lot from your Bengali friends," commented Lord Quantock. " But go on : I gather that you and they have a plan which is approved by the Secretary of State ? "

" Mr Derwent does know and approve of it, but insists that Your Excellency shall approve also if it is to go through."

" Just so. If it comes off he will get any credit there may be. If it fails I shall be held responsible."

" Admirably put, Your Excellency, if I may say so. But it will not fail, and if it succeeds, as it must, I trust my share in bringing it about will not be entirely ignored."

" There is little fear of that," was the sarcastic comment. " But what is this great scheme ? "

" It is hardly a scheme, Sir. It is more a very simple plan. As I have explained, the hands of the Executive are tied ; the military authorities will not put a stop to this drilling, and the Government can do nothing on its own initiative because these men are behaving with what I cannot help feeling is the most ill-timed propriety. But if the Legislature steps in and passes a resolution denouncing these activities, that will give us a handle."

" Ah, now I see the idea. You are a Machiavelli, Governor."

" You flatter me, Your Excellency. That is the plan. The Chamber of Representatives meets next Wednesday, and the resolution demanding the stoppage of the drilling and the disbandment of the volunteers will be submitted and, of course, passed, if not unanimously, at least by a tremendous majority. I have every reason to believe that the Council will endorse the resolution. It then comes up to the Government as the considered demand of the Parliament and people of Bengal."

" And you, of course, will then be in a position to act upon it and sweep them out of existence ? "

said the Viceroy, who had recaptured his most cynical mood.

" Not quite that, Your Excellency ; but it will give me a lever. I then propose to send for Hardy and his confederates, and hand them an ultimatum —either they will reduce their numbers and their hours of drilling, or the resolution will be carried into effect."

" And how do you propose to carry it into effect ? "

" I trust," replied the Governor with his most self-satisfied look, " that it will not be necessary. After all, the English in Calcutta are law-abiding people ; and when their leaders receive the most solemn warning from the head of the Government that their proceedings are looked upon as dangerous to the peace of Calcutta if not actually unlawful, and when it is also pointed out that the Secretary of State and the home Cabinet are of the same opinion, I trust they will see the reasonableness of giving way."

" But supposing they don't, Governor, what are you going to do then ? "

" Why, in that case the strongest measures will become necessary. The police will have to take action to clear the maidan ; and if "—as the Viceroy's lips twitched into a sardonic smile—" if there is any question of interfering with the police we shall not hesitate to call out the troops in the fort, or even to bring the detachments from Barrackpore."

" Yes, and if these are not enough ? "

" If these are not enough," said the Governor, with a deliberateness which was meant to be highly impressive, " Your Excellency will see the Bengali nation itself taking a hand. The Bengalis also are armed : they have been wrought up to the extreme limit of forbearance by these military preparations of the Europeans ; and if the ordinary means at the

disposal of the Government are not sufficient to put a stop to the nuisance, I have every reason to believe that the Bengalis will join hands with the Government in order to enforce compliance."

"A very pretty little civil war, Governor, and very nicely arranged. But can you stop it once it has started, or prevent it from spreading and involving the whole country?"

"I think I can, Your Excellency," was the complacent reply. "You see, my influence over the Bengalis is unbounded. Without wishing to flatter myself, they would do anything for me. If they revolted against the Crown, I believe they would want to make me their first President. But, of course, no such contingency will arise. Hardy & Co. will give in—I am perfectly sure of that."

There was a long pause. The Viceroy was studying the face opposite him in an access of almost comic despair. What could be done about it? He knew quite well that the Governor had the Secretary of State behind him in this project, and for a very good reason—the Secretary of State had himself mentioned it over the telephone, and had practically forbidden him to interfere. At the same time his (the Viceroy's) sanction was to be obtained, so that if anything went wrong the Secretary of State might have a scapegoat. It was of a piece with the cool insolence with which his masters in Whitehall had treated him ever since he came to India to do their bidding. So far he had suffered it; but the madness which had demanded the humiliation of India's leading prince, and now the madness which was bent on baiting the British in Calcutta, were straining his complaisancy to the limit. It had not quite been reached, perhaps, but he knew to a certainty that soon it would be. The Sultan's outburst an hour before had touched a sense of shame that had long lain dormant.

Lord Quantock gazed thoughtfully at the heavy face of the Governor, marvelling at the fatality that had placed in the hands of the Empire-breakers in London exactly the instrument they required—a perfect fool and a perfect tool. And this lunatic was obviously determined to force the situation in Calcutta, a situation so delicate that only the highest tact combined with the utmost firmness could possibly avert a disaster!

Sir James Bowles stirred uneasily. Even he was vaguely conscious of the Viceroy's scrutiny; he felt that he was being examined as a curious entomological specimen. His self-esteem was piqued and his temper suffered.

"Well, Sir," he said, and his tone was less smooth than it had been, "has Your Excellency considered the matter? Am I at liberty to tell the Secretary of State that you approve my policy?"

"You are certainly not at liberty to do anything of the kind," the Viceroy replied. "In fact, I am not prepared to decide on the question off-hand. I must have time to consider it."

"May I remind you, Sir," said the Governor, "that the resolution comes up before the Legislative Chamber in four days, and that as the nuisance has become urgent, I shall have to deal with the matter immediately thereafter?"

"But, Governor," suggested the Viceroy, "surely you, with your great influence in Bengal, could get the Nationalists to postpone it?"

Sir James Bowles looked confused.

"Oh yes, I could do that," he answered, "but I don't feel that it would be politic to do so. Nor, I am sure, would the Secretary of State. I must, I am afraid, have a definite answer now. Does Your Excellency approve of the scheme or do you not?"

"Well, since you are determined to have my

opinion," was the answer, delivered in the Viceroy's most cutting manner, " I think it the most asinine proposal—except one—that has ever come up to me. It is folly urged to the point of madness. I have lent myself to one attempt to force the views of the Labour Government in Whitehall upon an innocent party, but I am not going to do it again."

Lord Quantock rose to his feet—a signal that the interview was over. The Governor also rose mechanically, but his face was pale, his eyes were staring, and his mouth was open.

" Asinine, Your Excellency ! That was the word you used, wasn't it ? " he gasped.

" For want of a better descriptive, yes," replied the Viceroy, " but it is far too mild for the thing itself."

" But, Sir, don't you know—surely you can't be aware—that my plan is not merely approved, but is enthusiastically endorsed by the Secretary of State and by the whole Cabinet ? "

" I am perfectly well aware of it ; and in that knowledge I repeat that it is stupidity gone mad. Now listen to me, Sir James. I will give you one chance of escape from the disaster which you are courting. I will delay my resignation for a week."

" Your Excellency's resignation ! " faltered the other.

" Yes, I have at last reached the end of my tether. I will no longer be a tool in the hands of Whitehall revolutionaries. If this wild attempt is made, I resign. It will then be plain to Parliament and the public that you and Mr Derwent—and the rest of the Cabinet if you like—have deliberately involved Bengal in civil war, and the rest of India, in all probability, in revolution. And you may depend upon it that they are not the men to stand by their instrument if he is unsuccessful. It is you who will incur all the blame—so think things well over,

Sir James, and pause before you take this fatal plunge. I leave for Burmah to-morrow, and should reach Rangoon on Wednesday—the morning of the day when the Legislative Chamber is to debate the resolution. You can stop it, or at the worst delay it. Do so, my dear Governor, if you value your reputation, or even your life. Delay is essential to the saving of the situation."

" On the contrary, Sir," cried the Governor, whose complacency had vanished for the time being, " delay will only aggravate matters. Unless the Legislature takes up the matter, and gives the Government an opportunity to act, the people of Calcutta will themselves dispute possession of the maidan with Hardy and his irregulars."

" In that event you will have a very good case for stepping in and binding over both sides to keep the peace. Nor will you have to bear the odium of having begun it."

" No, Sir, but I shall have to bear the odium of having it happen in my capital," answered the Governor. " Besides, I can't and won't hold back the Nationalist leaders any longer. Hardy and his friends do not know how often I have stood between them and an infuriated populace."

" Sir James Bowles," said His Excellency, putting out his hand in farewell, " you and I came out to India almost at the same time, and hitherto we have worked together for the emancipation of India. But this is the parting of the ways. You have allowed yourself to be manœuvred into a course which must end in disaster—possibly to the Empire, certainly to yourself. I am willing to do what I can to save you, but I must have time. This crisis must be postponed. You can delay it if you like. I look to you to do so."

If the Governor had not been so completely mesmerised by the flatteries of the Bengali Nation-

alists he might have listened. As it was, he was divided between a desire to avoid the unpleasant possibilities hinted at by the Viceroy—and a dread of forfeiting his Liberator's statue !

" Your Excellency," he said, with a bow which he meant to be impressive, " I will give close consideration to your request, and if I can possibly bring it within the purview of my duty, I will comply with it. But I must tell you that I am not a man who easily changes his mind. Once I resolve to do a thing I generally do it."

The Viceroy was about to reply—then shrugged his shoulders and moved to the door, followed by Sir James Bowles. As it opened he put forth his hand again, and said—

" Good-bye to you, Sir James ; but remember the true prophecy of the Nepalese statesman when his country was being forced into war with the British. ' Hitherto we have been chasing deer ; now we shall be hunting tiger.' When a man goes after tiger, Sir James, he has to be careful whom he goes hunting with. Good-bye—I hope it may be *au revoir ;* but that depends upon yourself."

" Good-bye, Your Excellency—and a pleasant voyage," replied the Governor, and turned to go, accompanied by a sorely puzzled Private Secretary.

CHAPTER THREE.

I.

HURRYING to the grand outer staircase of Belvedere, with the aide-de-camp in waiting hurrying after him, the Sultan of Jehanabad dismissed the aide with a brief handshake and flung himself into his limousine. As soon as the car had started he removed his turban, and, unpinning his orders, tossed the entire outfit into a corner, and put on a white topee which reposed on the opposite seat. Thus attired it would have been difficult at a glance to distinguish him from a bronzed and travelled European.

The sentry presented arms as he passed out of the gates; then he gave a new and unexpected direction to his chauffeur.

"To the Roughriders' headquarters, and be quick about it, Hassan."

The driver saluted, and swept over Zeerut Bridge and round the maidan at a pace which caused several other cars almost to shy. Hardy's headquarters looked over the maidan, and from his office he could watch his men at their daily exercises. It was a handsome three-storied pile, serving the purpose of a headquarters and a select hostel. One officer, besides the Colonel, was compelled to live there always. Another rule was that an officer was on duty night and day.

A number of young men in khaki were standing or seated in the corridors. Men could be seen in the orderly room: the recreation room was upstairs. The Colonel and the Adjutant occupied contiguous offices on the ground floor.

The Sultan, who was acquainted with the building, sprang lightly up the porch steps as the limou-

sine drew up. He made for Colonel Hardy's office, which he would have entered but for an orderly barring the way.

" I wish to see Colonel Hardy," he said, adding, " the Sultan of Jehanabad."

The orderly saluted, knocked at the door, entered the room, closed the door behind him—and almost immediately reappeared.

" Colonel Hardy will see Your Highness at once," he said.

He held the door open, closing it again noiselessly as the visitor passed through.

Colonel Hardy stood up as the Sultan entered, and shook hands in silence. The two men were about the same height, and as they looked each other intently in the face, Jim Montgomery, if he had been there, would have been surprised to notice that the Colonel's eyes were not of the hard grey hue which he had ascribed to them, but large and of a light blue. Their gaze was one of remarkable intensity : it was as though they were lit from behind—the eyes of an enthusiast, perhaps of a dreamer. Set in his resolute face the effect upon the onlooker was often startling.

The Sultan put his hat on the table, sat down in the visitor's chair, and offered his cigarette-case to Colonel Hardy, who declined it. He then selected a cigarette himself, and as he lit it he broke the silence.

" Well, Hardy, the fat is in the fire."

" You have refused to give in ? "

" Very much so. I have declared war on the Viceroy and the Secretary of State."

" What exactly does Your Highness mean ? "

" I lost my temper, Hardy—lost it completely and saw red. As you know, I went to Belvedere with my mind made up. I wasn't going to kow-tow to this ridiculous Assembly, even if it cost me my

guddi. I said so as plainly as I could. Then it came out that the whole thing is a frame-up to get me out of the way. The Secretary of State is in it up to the neck, and actually told the Viceroy over the telephone that he was determined to make me eat humble pie—his very words, according to His Excellency."

The speaker paused, and Hardy nodded.

"I don't wonder at your seeing red," he commented, "but what followed?"

"I put an end to the interview," answered the Sultan, with a smile as he recalled the Viceroy's astonishment. "I told His Excellency to tell Mr Derwent that I would be damned first; also that if they proposed to turn me out, they would have to come to Jehanabad to do it!"

"My dear Sultan! The fat *is* in the fire."

"You may as well hear the whole story. I was moved to add that I washed my hands both of the Government of India and the Secretary of State—that if I retained my life and my throne, I would own allegiance to the Crown alone. Then I took French leave and quitted the presence."

Hardy's brilliant eyes, which had never left the Sultan's face, now fell, and he looked before him, drumming on the table with his hand. The Sultan smoked vigorously, and watched him in his turn. He had not to wait long for the comment he had invited.

"Sultan," said Hardy, looking up again, "I am infinitely honoured by your confidence—and delighted to hear what you have done."

The Sultan looked relieved. "Then you don't think I put my foot in it?"

"Technically, I daresay. To disown a Viceroy to his face isn't generally done. And I don't suppose Mr Derwent will ever speak to you again. But they wanted a lesson badly—and I think you have taught them one."

" That is all very well, Colonel, but I am afraid I have given it them at the expense of my subjects and incidentally myself."

" I don't think so. A bully, remember, is always a coward. They have banked on your submission, and to have their threats flung back in their teeth as you have done will certainly stagger them—for a time, at all events. They know in their hearts that there is trouble brewing in the native army —although they try to bluff the public into believing that there is nothing the matter. They will make no move in the meantime. They will try—ineffectively, of course—to blanket the reports that will be current about this morning's interview; and they will let you alone for the present. All you have to do is to go quietly back to your capital, remain there till you hear from me, and keep your powder dry."

" Till I hear from you ? "

" Well, till events mature a little further on this side. Then you can count on hearing from me."

" When, then, will that be ? "

" I wish I could answer that question, Sultan. It may be very soon. It may even be this week. It may not be till next month. But I don't imagine that it can be delayed more than two or three weeks at the utmost. Now to business. At what notice can you mobilise your contingent ? "

" In twelve hours."

" I think you said that you had 6000 men altogether ? "

" Five hundred sabres, the same number of lances, four battalions of infantry, an artillery division, a corps of sappers and miners, and fifty aeroplanes. My regular troops will compare with any in India. In addition to these, there are three corps of irregulars in reserve, and five hundred military police."

"That must give you nearly 10,000 men at a pinch?"

"About that. But, Hardy, we can't talk of mobilisation as though my troops were going to operate on their own. The only condition on which I would be prepared to mobilise would be that at least three or four of the Princes joined forces with mine."

"That, of course, is understood. I was just coming to it. I think you said that Rajwarra, Jhelumgarh, Babergunge, and Jodhgarh were prepared to follow you if you took up arms? What is their aggregate strength?"

"Ten to twelve thousand regulars, with a smaller backing of reserves, and about a hundred aeroplanes."

"I take it that the lesser States would also follow your lead?"

"Some of them undoubtedly; but a very considerable number are so disgruntled that they are more likely to throw in their lot with the mutineers."

"At any rate, Sultan, you can reckon on trained forces numbering nearly 20,000 men, should you give the signal?"

"Yes, I feel sure I can reckon on that total at least. Of course, I can only speak absolutely about my own army. For that I am prepared to vouch: every man in it will follow me to the death."

Hardy looked across the table with a grim smile. Here was another leader who had complete confidence in the loyalty of his men.

"You are in a much stronger position than the Government of India," he remarked. "I doubt whether they have half that number of loyal troops to depend on."

The Sultan rose. "Then you are not prepared to disclose your plans, Hardy?" he said. "And yet we are almost on the rapids. Surely it would be better, if we are to co-operate, that you should

take me more into your confidence? I have concealed nothing from you."

Hardy also stood up. "I feel almost guilty about it, Sultan," he replied; "but you must trust me for a few more days, or even weeks. I vow that the moment that I see clearly I will communicate with you and define my exact position. At present it is difficult—in fact impossible for me to do so. You would have a just grievance against me if I unfolded one plan to you to-day and then adopted another a week hence. Honestly, if I could take any man into my confidence, it would be Your Highness."

The Sultan still wore a slight frown, and Hardy looked at him for a moment very steadily.

"If you doubt me, ask the Princess Roshanara what she thinks about the situation," he said. "I imagine she will tell you that I am right to keep my own counsel in the meantime."

The Sultan stared at him almost haughtily for a few seconds. Then he laughed and patted the other on the shoulder.

"You have hit the right nail on the head," he said. "I will consult Roshanara, of course; and if she backs you, so will I—up to my last penny and into the last ditch."

II.

Leaving Calcutta by fast aeroplane at half-past one in the afternoon, and flying without a halt, the Sultan reached his capital shortly before dark. Jehanabad is a famous walled city in the central regions of India, with a dozen gates and a population of at least a quarter of a million. Its streets are mean and narrow, but its bazaars are as picturesque as any in India, and are thronged by as cosmopolitan a crowd as ever lent variety to the wynds and thoroughfares of Constantinople or Baghdad—Arabs,

Africans, Afghans, Rajputs, Marwaris, Bengalis, Mahrattas, Burmans, arrayed in every conceivable colour and fashion, but showing an increasing tendency to ape the drab uniformity of the West. For one person remaining faithful to the *chudder* and *dhoti* of orthodox Hinduism, or to the *chapkhan* and *pyjamas* of the untravelled Musulman, there are two who will be found in the plain coat and continuations which have become the almost universal wear of the clerkly classes in Calcutta and Bombay. Even so, the Jehanabad nobility still maintain, as far as possible, the picturesque tradition of their forefathers, and occasionally come forth from their strongly fortified mediæval homes, followed by armed retainers, they themselves also being armed to the teeth.

The city of Jehanabad is, of course, a Mohammedan city, and some of its striking buildings are its mosques, erected centuries ago by the piety of ruling princes and nobles. Several of these stand on low eminences, or on open spaces, illuminated with special brilliance by electricity, which is supplied by the harnessing of one or other of the great rivers intersecting the Sultan's dominions. Approaching the city by night, they stood out prominently from the huddle of mean streets.

The Sultan's Palace lay almost in the centre of the city: a comparatively modern edifice, with a vast white façade in the Italian manner, lit up at night with a dazzling brilliancy which challenged comparison with any other building; for royalty, as the Sultan used to say sometimes, with a sigh, has many penalties attaching to it in India. Public opinion in Jehanabad would have condemned any attempt on his part to reduce the effect of these illuminations, and one reason of his popularity with his subjects was his intuitive understanding of them, and of their little prejudices.

By way of compensation, the Palace grounds were spacious and beautiful, and in them it was almost possible to forget that one was in the heart of an Oriental capital. Miniature lakes spanned by rustic bridges, in which played fountains innumerable, grassy banks and delightful clumps of shady trees, as well as flower-beds on perfectly kept lawns, helped the illusion.

Tucked away behind the glittering Palace, in the pleasantest part of the grounds, was a large two-storied villa, called a Guest House, but in reality the dwelling-place of the Sultan and his sister Roshanara when in residence at the capital. Zuleika Zanum, his wife, to whom he had been betrothed at the age of twelve before he was sent to England, lived in the Palace. She was orthodox, dwelt strictly behind the purdah, and led a life as completely severed from that of her husband as did the wife of Frederick the Great.

The Sultan and his sister, on the contrary, had been inseparable from childhood. They had gone to England together, had seen each other at frequent intervals during vacations while he was at Eton and Oxford, and since their return to India had remained constant companions and friends. This life-long companionship had not only strengthened their affection for each other, but had bred a very real respect and mutual understanding. Zahir-ud-din frequently consulted Roshanara on matters of importance, for he knew her judgment to be sound. Roshanara in her turn thought there was no one like her brother, and her persistent refusal to marry was due to the fact that she had met no man who measured up to his standard.

Landing at the aerodrome, two miles outside the city walls, the Sultan motored easily to the Guest House in a quarter of an hour. If they had been in England the Princess Roshanara would have

flown to the door to greet her returning brother; but in his capital princely conventions had to be considered, and she therefore awaited him in her boudoir—a restful room decorated in amethyst and gold, and as English as a patriotic Indian princess could make it without destroying its Indian atmosphere.

In two minutes the Sultan knocked at the door of her boudoir, and entering, brother and sister embraced in the English fashion—a luxury from which they were debarred except when quite alone.

Roshanara, the Sultan's only sister, was at this time between twenty-four and twenty-five. She was tall for a woman and slim for an Indian of her age: and yet her figure had those vigorous lines which foretold a matronly dignity later on. She was even fairer than her brother, with more delicately regular features. She had strongly marked but beautifully arched eyebrows, and the eyes beneath them were by no means languorous, as one felt they ought to have been. They were dark, and they laughed at you, but every now and then they became deep wells of seriousness. She was in semi-European dress—that is, the dress was obviously from one of the great French houses, but over her beautiful head she wore an Indian *sari* as fine as gossamer, cunningly woven with gold thread and lightly draped around her.

"Well, Bay," she said, calling him by her one pet name (short for Bayard) and smiling as she kissed him, "are you very tired?"

"Not too tired to talk to you," he answered, sitting down beside her on the couch before the fire. They spoke in English: the scene, with the subdued lights and the cheerful fire, might have been laid in a London drawing-room.

"Will you have a cup of tea?" she asked.

"No, thanks, 'Nara; I fed all right on the way. I say, there's been the devil's own row up there."

"Naturally; and you have defied the Viceroy and the Government of India."

"Right, as usual; and I have now come back to put my capital into a state of defence."

"What has happened, Bay?"

"I have refused point-blank to readmit Harish Chunder into my dominions; I have called the Viceroy a tool of Socialists and revolutionaries; I have thrown off allegiance to the Government of India; and I have dared them to come to Jehanabad and turn me out by force."

"But, my dear, was it necessary to go to such lengths as that?"

"Of course it wasn't, but when the cynic Quantock let out that the whole thing had been carefully arranged to get me out of the way I nearly hit the ceiling. I spoke out as I imagine none of us has ever dared to do before, and I'm dashed glad I did now."

"No one could possibly blame you, dear, but I wish you could have controlled your temper."

"Hardy doesn't think I have done myself any harm. He predicts that my attack will take them so much by surprise that they will do nothing in the meantime. And if they put off my punishment at all, the mutiny may intervene and put it completely out of their heads."

"You mean Colonel Hardy of the Roughriders?"

"That's the man, 'Nara. By the way, he told me to refer a certain matter to your judgment."

The Princess raised her handsome eyebrows. "Why in the world should he do that?" she asked. "And what does he know of me?"

"Well, he seems to know that you have a wise little head—and to surmise shrewdly that you have a certain amount of influence with your brother."

"It sounds distinctly impertinent. Why, I have

only met him once—that was at dinner at Government House, when he sat next to me and scarcely opened his mouth."

"That's interesting, 'Nara. Hardy is a strong man, but by no means a silent one—you must have impressed him."

The Princess shrugged her shoulders. "Did I?" she asked. "From his attitude I shouldn't have thought he had noticed me at all. As a matter of fact, he was talking hard to the woman on his right, and the only remark he made to me was to ask me if I had ever gone in for ambulance training."

"Always with a single eye to contingencies," laughed the Sultan. "Now let me tell you what we were talking about this morning. After my flare-up with His Excellency I went along to Hardy's headquarters, when he told me he thought I had done quite right and that nothing will happen immediately. We then got to discussing possibilities—as we have done before—and we again went over the armament of myself and the Big Four of Maharasthra. He asked me significantly how long it would take me to mobilise, and I told him. Then I asked him what his ideas were as to the immediate future; but as to that he set that square jaw of his and refused to say another word. He apologised for his apparent want of confidence in me—said that if there was any man in India whom he would trust it was I—but the upshot was that he didn't himself know what his plans were, so how could he communicate them to me?"

"Yes, Bay, and what was the point referred to me?"

"Well, I, of course, was rather gravelled at being put off in this manner, and then he fired his Parthian shot. 'Ask Princess Roshanara whether she considers I am right,' he said. 'I feel pretty confident she will.'"

A flush came over the Princess's delicate face. "Really," she smiled. "Did he actually tell you that? He seems to take a great deal for granted. As a matter of fact, I think he is treating us both rather cavalierly. Why should he want to pry into our plans and then to withhold his own from us—that is from you? Before you commit yourself further, cannot you demand to know his line of action?"

"I shall know it almost at once without any demanding," replied her brother, smiling to himself at the failure of Hardy's appeal to his sister. "He seemed to think that the crisis is almost on us, and assured me that the moment it arrives I shall hear from him."

The Princess raised her head, and holding it rather high, commented: "We live in strange times, Bay, when the Sultan of Jehanabad awaits a signal from the commandant of a regiment of Roughriders."

"If it comes to that," her brother replied, "I would sooner take orders from Hardy, who is a born leader of men, than from a lot of flatulent baboos at Delhi."

"Apropos," said the Princess, "Harish Chunder has come back."

"Come back! To Jehanabad! When?" cried the Sultan.

"Yes, he turned up yesterday, and was, of course, taken into custody. He fretted and fumed tremendously—demanded that a wireless should be sent to the Viceroy, and another to the President of the Assembly, telling them of the latest outrage that had been perpetrated upon him. He was told that all that would have to wait till you came back; and now he is in solitary confinement."

"Quite right," said the Sultan, in deep thought. "What do you make of it, 'Nara?"

"Another attempt to bait you, of course. If you

do anything to him you will be at once brought to book, and if you don't he will defy you in your own capital."

"Yes, I suppose he will try to if he gets the chance," said Zahir-ud-din slowly. "But I have sworn by the Prophet that he will not get it—and he won't."

"What will you do with him?" asked his sister.

"I wish you could come to my office after dinner!" exclaimed the Sultan as he rose. "You would have the time of your life; but I'm afraid it wouldn't do for you to assist at a drum-head court-martial. And now I must run to tub and dress."

III.

Zahir-ud-din and Roshanara dined together quietly in the cosy little private dining-room of the Guest House. On such occasions the Sultan always appeared in European evening dress; but this evening he wore the smart undress uniform of a Colonel of the Jehanabad Lancers—khaki, with chain shoulder-straps, a blue sash caught with a brown leather belt, and a handsome blue puggaree to match. The Princess commented upon the change.

"I am holding a kind of court-martial," he explained, "and am dressing accordingly. I hope Harish Baboo will appreciate the compliment—but I doubt it."

After dinner the Sultan rose. "I must now have my little talk with Harish Baboo," he said. "But I don't suppose it will take very long. If you haven't gone to bed, I shall come back and tell you all about it in less than an hour."

She kissed her hand to him as he left the room. Attended by his Private Secretary and an aide-de-camp, the Sultan crossed the lawn to the Palace, which he entered by a side door, going straight to

his private office adjoining the *Dewani-i-Am*, or public hall of audience. It was a large business-like room, oblong in shape, and plainly furnished except for the priceless Bokhara carpet which covered the whole floor. Here, awaiting His Excellent Highness, were the Prime Minister, the Commanders of two infantry battalions, the Chief of Police, and the Captain of the Guard, all in uniform. The group saluted the Sultan as he took his seat at his massive writing-table with his back to a large window looking out upon the Palace gardens. The little company arranged itself around him, the Prime Minister being immediately to his right and the Chief of Police to his left.

"Asaf-ullah Khan," said His Highness to the latter officer, "will you give me a verbal report on this case?"

The Chief of Police had been at Oxford with His Highness. He now stepped forward, saluted, and produced a paper, which he handed to the Sultan. "That is my written report, Most Excellent," he said. "But to save time and trouble I will give the gist of it. Harish Chunder made his way into Jehanabad by train, went straight to the bazaar and began to stir up trouble. Immediately on hearing of his presence I had him arrested and kept in *hajit* until Your Highness should return."

"How did he behave when arrested?" asked the Sultan.

"Talked violently, Your Highness. Demanded to know the section under which he was proceeded against, and said the Assembly would declare war against Your Excellent Highness unless he was released at once. He also said——" Here the speaker paused.

"Yes," continued the Sultan, smiling, "what did he also say?"

"He had the insolence to say that Your Highness

was equally the subject of the Government of India with any one in British India, and Your Highness had no right to lay a finger on him."

" An arguable proposition in Delhi, perhaps," was the dry comment, " but a trifle ill-chosen for Jehanabad. Bring the prisoner in."

At a sign from the Chief, an orderly went out and presently returned with Harish Chunder Chatterjee in the custody of two stalwart sowars.

Harish Chunder Chatterjee was a man of thirty, large and fleshy, with a slight moustache, and hair which in the ordinary way would have been thick and sleek, but was now somewhat dishevelled. He had prominent truculent eyes, which gleamed behind thick gold spectacles, and was dressed in the older-fashioned Bengali style, in white *chudder* and *dhoti*, neither of which was any the cleaner after a disturbed night passed in the central jail of Jehanabad. He himself, however, was full of confidence, and the moment he found himself before the Sultan he opened his speech for the defence in spirited fashion.

" Your Highness," he said in fluent English, " I protest this outrage upon free British subject. I claim my right to enter Jehanabad freely in terms of resolution passed by honourable Assembly at Delhi. By what right, sir, do your police deprive me of liberty and plunge me into durance vile when I have done no crime or misdemeanour punishable under Indian Penal Code? I hereby call upon Your Highness for immediate release without prejudice to any claim which I, my heirs, or assigns may hereafter bring against your State for wrongful imprisonment. If I am not released instantly, I will appeal to His Excellency the Viceroy and to the Imperial Assembly at Delhi, who will certainly demand Your Highness' deposition for unprovoked attack upon peaceful citizen of British India."

While this speech was in progress of delivery the

Sultan leant back in his chair observing the speaker with an air of amused curiosity. When Harish Chunder threatened him with deposition, two of the officers surrounding His Highness started forward as if to close his mouth forcibly. Zahir-ud-din put up his hand to restrain them, and then spoke himself.

" Very eloquent—very eloquent indeed, Mr Chatterjee," he said, " and I am glad you are so eager to claim the privileges of a British subject. Your general attitude is rather to disown your British status, isn't it ? But your eloquence is rather wasting itself in references to the Indian Penal Code or to any law prevailing in British India. In this State the only Code which matters is the Jehanabad Code, of which the Sovereign is the ultimate interpreter. I will therefore ask you to address yourself to the serious breach of that Code for which you have been arrested. You were deported from Jehanabad six months ago by my orders, for reasons which I then deemed and still deem sufficient, and were forbidden to return on peril of your life. You have returned, and your life is therefore *ipso facto* forfeit. I am taking the trouble to try you myself in order to make quite certain that no mistake will be made. Don't waste time by talking about the Imperial Assembly. The Imperial Assembly is nothing to me."

His voice took on a rasp which was partly spontaneous and partly calculated.

" The Imperial Assembly may pass fifty resolutions deposing me," he went on, " but it is powerless to give effect to a single one of them. And even if it were not, what good would that do you ? You are here in Jehanabad, having re-entered my dominions in defiance of my orders, and having thereby rendered yourself liable to the extreme penalty, which I am ready to pronounce immediately unless you can urge any reasons to the contrary. If you can

show any reasons why you should not be summarily dealt with, state them; but don't waste my time and yours by dragging in irrelevant appeals to an outside authority which, so far as I am concerned, does not exist."

As His Excellent Highness ceased, a measured tramp of armed men, which had begun while he was speaking, suddenly became loud and insistent. Then, outside the room, could be heard very clearly staccato words of command.

"Part-ee, halt! By the right. Or-r-der hup! Stunda Tease!" A dozen rifle-butts jarred on the pavement of the courtyard—and also on Harish Chatterjee's nerves. The Sultan smiled grimly.

"Is that your firing-party, Colonel Dost Mohamed?" he asked.

One of the bearded warriors in khaki took a step forward and saluted.

"It is, Most Excellent."

"Ah! Let the men fall out in the meantime. They will probably be wanted in half an hour."

The orderly again left the room, while the prisoner, his confidence having largely evaporated although he retained some of his truculence, exclaimed—

"Your Highness is surely not going to shoot me simply for disobeying an order of externment? Such action would be unprecedented! The civilised world would ring with denunciation of your barbarity."

"To take your points *seriatim*," replied the Sultan smoothly. "First, I have every intention of shooting you, unless you can advance more convincing reasons against it than you have yet done. Secondly, I have no doubt hundreds of precedents could be discovered for the action which I am about to take; but if not, then I am quite prepared to create one. Thirdly, the civilised world may or may not denounce me, if it ever hears of the

fate of so obscure an agitator as yourself; but once more let me remind you that all the denunciations of my barbarity will not bring you back to life if I see fit to execute you. Now, Harish Baboo, for the last time, have you anything to urge why I should not pronounce sentence?"

The stern words were as sternly delivered, and the effect was to complete the deflation of Harish Chunder. Bursting into tears, he hurled himself forward, and, kneeling, grasped the Sultan's desk with both hands. His warders rushed forward and endeavoured to drag him back; but the man was desperate, and clung to the table as a limpet does to a rock.

"Oh, my God, my Royal Highness!" he gasped. "Have mercy on this unfortunate fellow and pardon my heinous offence! I am only tool of others. I did not wish to return. I am sole support of my large family, who will be condemned to horrors of starvation."

At this point, finding himself out of his depth in English, and feeling instinctively that an emotional appeal could be better made in an Oriental tongue, he plunged into Hindustani, and poured forth a torrent of supplication and flattery. The Sultan listened until the stream of eloquence had dried up; then he raised his head with a gentle sigh, and motioned to the guards to remove the prisoner's grasp from the table, to which his damp fingers were doing little good.

"If you have no more to say, the death sentence is pronounced," said His Excellent Highness. "Colonel Dost Mohamed, your party will be ready to act in half an hour. Asaf-ullah Khan, will you go with the prisoner and give him any help he requires and note down any messages he may have for his relatives. Remove the prisoner."

Struggling and screaming, the Baboo was dragged

from the table and from the presence. He continued without a moment's intermission to shriek out supplications in English and Hindustani, and at last, just as he reached the door, he turned by a superhuman effort and cried in English—

"My Lord God, I give information. I betray mutineers. I tell you when rising is fixed for and what mutineers will do."

"He will betray his confederates, will he?" said the Sultan, as Harish Chunder disappeared through the doorway. "I don't imagine that he has much information of importance. Still, if he does happen to have a fact or two up his sleeve, it may be worth while annexing it."

Scribbling a line on a scrap of paper, he handed it to the Chief of Police.

"If he squeals sufficiently, and especially if you see your way to getting more out of him, this will be your warrant for respiting him. As a matter of fact, I never intended to shoot him, but his insolence provoked me so much that I made up my mind to frighten him. It will certainly have been worth while if we can get a pointer about the mutiny. Take a careful note of what he says, or better still, Asaf-ullah, get him to write out and sign as full a statement as possible. I am particularly desirous of early and accurate information as to the mutiny. Report to me in an hour at the Guest House. Good night, gentlemen."

So saying, the Sultan dismissed his little Court, and returned to Princess Roshanara's drawing-room, where he amused her by a faithful description (in character, for he was a famous mimic) of the trial.

In a little more than half an hour Asaf-ullah Khan was ushered in. He saluted the Princess.

"Harish Chunder is still writing out his statement, Most Excellent," he said, "and it promises to be a

very long one. I have, however, noted down the gist of his information. The mutiny is to begin in twelve days' time—on the 14th November, to be exact."

"Where?"

"At every military station and cantonment in Northern India. The chief objective is New Delhi, which will be looted and destroyed; the next, to seize all the principal towns and stations, from Lahore to Benares."

"Bokharistan?"

"Will provide 500 aeroplanes to complete the surprise of the British at Delhi and Risalpur; afterwards, two army corps."

"That is quite cunning," observed His Excellent Highness. "The mutinous troops are to do the rough work and get any knocks that may be forthcoming. Then when both they and the British are exhausted, King Yakub Khan leads a fresh army to the conquest of Hindustan."

"What will the British Air Force be doing all this time?" asked Roshanara with keen interest.

"It will have been hamstrung, Your Highness," replied Asaf-ullah. "The mutineers will concentrate on burning the hangars at Risalpur, Delhi, Rawalpindi, Dum Dum, and the personnel will be cut down while they are fighting the flames."

"A wonderful plot," commented the Sultan. "It sounds almost too perfect. And who are the leaders?"

"That the prisoner professes not to know, Most Excellent. But he thinks that the brain of the conspiracy is outside the army—probably one or more of the Northern Hindus. The Assembly is in it up to the neck. Its function is to keep harrying the Government, and distracting its attention while the British forces are being reduced or dissipated. The conspirators do not trouble themselves about

Bengal or Southern India. Once the north is in their hands, they can overrun the rest at their leisure."

"But they cannot ignore the great ports, surely?" asked Zahir-ud-din, in a slightly sarcastic tone.

"Oh no, Your Highness. There will be a massacre of the English and the Parsees in Bombay, and then the mutineers will hold the island and seize any shipping that remains. As regards Calcutta, the mill hands are being armed, the Indian troops have been corrupted, and these with the National Volunteers and the element of surprise will, they hope, enable them to make themselves masters of the place."

"But—but what about Colonel Hardy and his volunteers?" asked the Princess with a heightened colour.

"They hope," answered Asaf-ullah, "that they will have been disarmed beforehand. They consider that they have the Governor in their pocket, and he is about to order Hardy's disbandment. If Hardy obeys the order they have the Europeans at their mercy. If he disobeys it they look forward to a battle royal between Hardy and the English regular troops, which will cripple both and give them a walk-over when they are ready to strike."

"This fellow Harish knows too much," said the Sultan. "Why did they send him down here?"

"To get at Your Highness' army," was the answer. "They know you are 16 annas for British rule, and that your troops will be the most formidable unit on the side of the Government when trouble comes. But if your troops can be induced to mutiny, they have great hopes of stampeding the other States into joining them."

"It seems almost a pity we respited him," mused Zahir-ud-din. "But there seems little doubt that he has told us a few things which are important.

Sit down, Asaf-ullah, and let us talk over the business. How is it that this widespread conspiracy has been kept from the Government of India, for the Viceroy would hardly be going to Burmah if he had the least inkling that India was a live volcano about to erupt at any moment ? "

" The reason, sir, is very simple," answered the Chief of Police. " In the first place, the Secretariats, including the Army Department, are governed by bureaucrats, who are all for Indianisation and eventual evacuation by the British. In the second place, the clerical establishments are honeycombed with treason, and take care that no report hinting at the real state of things comes to the heads of the departments. In the third place, the Army administration is incredibly slack and disheartened. The soldiers know that whatever they may do will be wrong, and have lost interest in their job."

" Then what is to be done ? " asked the Sultan. " Here is information of vital importance to the Government, but it is no use my thinking of carrying it to them, partly because I am suspect and partly because even if I weren't they would probably take no notice of it. The only possibility of making any real use of it would be to tell Hardy ; but there again I am bunkered. I can't go back to Calcutta after what happened this morning. Nor can I send anyone with a despatch. It is too vital a matter to run any risks. How are we to get the news through to Hardy ? "

" Can't I help, Bay ? " asked his sister, breaking into their conversation. " I can go if you can't. Why shouldn't I take the message to Colonel Hardy ? I can fly to Calcutta to-morrow and give it to him myself *viva voce*."

Zahir-ud-din threw a startled look at the Princess. Her eyes were glowing, and her cheeks were slightly flushed. She smiled as she noticed his look of alarm.

" Don't look so worried, dear," she went on. " I have often made nearly as long flights, and I can take a guard as well as a pilot."

" But," protested the Sultan, " how will you get past the aerial police at Calcutta ? "

" Surely that can be managed. Let me think a minute. . . . I know—I shall go *via* Chandernagore. I can land there without anyone questioning me, as it is in French territory. I would come down quietly in a field, change my frock, leave Mozaffur and Ayam Khan to look after the machine, and enter Calcutta by train as an ordinary passenger. I shall then go straight to Colonel Hardy's headquarters—it will be quite simple."

" Yes, but what about your return ? And can you be sure about preserving your incognito ? "

" Once I get to Calcutta and deliver my message to Colonel Hardy, it will be up to him to get me out again," replied the Princess. " But I see no reason why I should not spend the night with some woman friend of his, train back to Chandernagore next morning, and be back in Jehanabad the same night."

" It is rather an idea," said her brother musingly. " Hardy, of course, can be trusted to look after you once you get in touch with him. Well, 'Nara, it's so vital that Hardy should hear our news that I am prepared to let you go. I can see you pulling it off, as you do with everything you make up your mind to."

" Very well, then, that is settled," said the Princess, rising. " I will leave you and Asaf-ullah Khan to make the arrangements. Meanwhile, I will get a little sleep—I must take off at daylight. Good night, my darling Bay—you try and get a little sleep, too. Good night, Asaf-ullah Khan."

CHAPTER FOUR.

I.

At four o'clock on Monday afternoon Jim Montgomery sat with two other applicants on a bench outside the office of Colonel Hardy at the Roughriders' Headquarters. He had received permanent leave of absence from his firm, and was now about to become a whole-time soldier—if Colonel Hardy accepted him. He had heard all sorts of yarns about Hardy's exclusiveness and arbitrary rejections, and wondered whether he would pass the test, whatever it was, that was to be imposed on him.

An orderly, with side-arms and a loaded revolver, stood on guard at the door. Khaki-clad troopers, most of them young, came and went along the corridor. Time passed, and Montgomery began to wonder whether Ravenhill had not made a mistake in telling him to come in the afternoon to be 'vetted.' At last he asked the orderly if the Colonel was likely to see him.

"The Colonel has a visitor just now, but he will see you if you will wait," was the reply, with which the aspiring recruit had perforce to rest content.

At last, after Montgomery, who was the first of his batch, had waited for half an hour, the door of the Colonel's room opened, and out came the most striking-looking woman Montgomery had ever seen. She was dressed in the garb of a nurse of the St John Ambulance Association. Young, tall and straight as a dart, she carried herself like no nurse on whom his young eyes had ever rested. Her face, a pale olive in colour, was slightly flushed, a stain of red was on each cheek; her dark eyes

flashed with intelligence and humour, and a delightful smile showed off her exquisite mouth to perfection. She was talking in a low contralto to Major Bellingham, the second in command, who listened with an air of respect and unaccustomed deference.

The orderly, together with the troopers who thronged the corridor, came instantly to attention, and the dazed young candidates for the corps sprang to their feet. They were rewarded by a brilliant smile from the fair unknown, and by a remark from her to Major Bellingham (as the two passed into the outer vestibule), which Jim hoped fervently was one of approval.

"Who is she?" asked the youngest and most impressionable of the group of applicants; but the others knew not, and the troopers would not have answered the question even if they had been able to. The three gazed intently after her as long as she remained in view, and then turned to look at each other. Their mutual interest had broken down their reserve, and they had just begun to talk of other things when the orderly reappeared with a summons for "Mr Montgomery."

II.

The Colonel's fair visitor was, of course, the Princess Roshanara, who had given him one of the surprises of his life. She had found him by no means easy to get at. Lady callers at his headquarters were extremely few; in point of fact the only women who had ever intruded were two of the "Little Sisters of the Poor," who had successfully raided them for contributions to their charitable work. The appearance of a nurse—and such a nurse—was absolutely unprecedented, and the orderly, who was an Oxford product and prided

himself upon his tact, had at first assured her, politely but firmly, that Colonel Hardy was much too busy to interview any lady who had not made an appointment.

"But surely," said the visitor with her brilliant smile, "Colonel Hardy occasionally sees people who come on specially important business—even if they haven't made an appointment?"

"Er—yes," said the orderly, his firmness beginning to desert him, "but they have always been men."

"Colonel Hardy will certainly see me if you will announce me," said Roshanara, altering her tone, and the orderly at once became conscious of a note of authority. "Will you be so good as to take my name in to him—Sister Rosamund, of the St John Ambulance, Jehanabad branch?"

Amazed almost equally by the command and by the alacrity with which he found himself obeying it, the young man placed at her disposal the only chair in the corridor, and entered the room, somewhat flustered. Hardy looked up.

"A lady to see you, sir—Sister Rosamund, of St John Ambulance, Jehanabad branch—says she has most important business with you."

"Sister Rosamund, St John Ambulance——! I never heard of her. What does she want?"

"I don't know, sir, but she practically ordered me to announce her, and is absolutely confident that you will see her."

"Is she?" commented the Colonel, whose mind was working rapidly. "Jehanabad branch—what is she like?"

"Tall, vivacious, aristocratic, olive-complexioned—and, by Gad, sir, she's handsome!"

The flicker of a smile passed over Hardy's face. He instantly recovered his habitual gravity, and said—

" Willis, be careful. Show her in."

He rose as Roshanara entered the room, and started slightly as he met her gaze. He murmured a conventional greeting, and placed a chair for her as Willis retired.

The tension was at once relaxed.

" Thank you so much, Colonel Hardy, for not giving me away," she said. " It was very clever of you to recognise me—and say nothing. I have just flown from Jehanabad to give you a message from my brother."

" So I surmised, Princess. It must be of great importance to have brought you on such a journey. It must, in fact, be vital. Now, Princess, I am all attention. What have you to tell me ? "

" That the general mutiny and revolt has been planned to break out in eleven days' time, involving Delhi and the whole of Northern India. The Presidency towns are also threatened. Bokharistan is also helping—first with five hundred aeroplanes, and later with two army corps."

" Eleven days' time ! " exclaimed Hardy, with a start. " As soon as that ? The rest accords exactly with my own information. Who is your brother's informant ? "

" Harish Chunder Chatterjee, the Bengali agitator, came back to Jehanabad on Sunday in defiance of the interdict, and was arrested. Bayard tried him last night as soon as he got back, frightened him almost to death by sentencing him to it ; and in order to save his life he blurted out the whole plan in detail, including the sack of Calcutta by the mill hands, who have been armed."

" The mill hands ? " said Hardy thoughtfully. " That, I confess, is news to me. But it is a natural plan to be suggested by the Baboos who are working the conspiracy from this end—though how the Hindu lawyers are going to fare if ever the Moham-

medan mill hands get loose with arms in their hands is a point they can scarcely have considered. What else did he tell your brother, Princess ? "

Roshanara proceeded to repeat Harish Chunder's statement in detail, and Hardy, despite his absorption in her narrative, could not refrain from admiration as he noted the clearness and succinctness of her report. Recalling her flight from Jehanabad that day, he realised, not perhaps for the first time, that here was a most charming woman, with the mind and the courage of a man. What a wife for a soldier or statesman ! What a mother of heroes !

He roused himself and listened intently until her story was finished.

" You see, don't you," she said at its conclusion, " why my brother couldn't communicate these facts to the Government ? He is suspect, and he felt that the only way to make any use of them was to let you know."

" And you were the only possible messenger ? " he queried.

She met his keen gaze steadily. " I was. No one else in his confidence could be spared, and besides, the information was too important to risk committing it to writing. So "—she hesitated, and her eyes fell before his—" I volunteered to carry it. It was quite an easy flight."

" It was a very brave and public-spirited act," he replied. " And I am highly honoured that you should have come to me. But the trouble at the present moment is that I am also suspect, and that no one knows where the Government of India or Army Headquarters are. The Viceroy is on the high seas. The Commander-in-Chief is lying ill in Lahore. The other members of the Executive are scattered all over India, and it is difficult to ascertain their whereabouts or which of them to approach.

It seems to me that the best method of countering this conspiracy is to limit the scope of its action as much as possible, and especially to keep the sea gates open—that is to say, to make sure of the great ports, of which Calcutta is the chief. As I see things, Princess, my first duty is to Calcutta and its citizens, for whose safety I have practically made myself responsible."

" Perhaps you are right," said Roshanara. Then after a pause, " Do you think I need have come ? "

" Of course, Princess ! Your information is vital —especially with regard to the date of the rising. We now have at least a chance of getting ready for the worst. But you must be tired after your journey. When are you returning to Jehanabad, and where are you staying to-night ? "

" Well, I have left my plane just outside Chandernagore," she replied. " I propose flying back tomorrow if all goes well. My pilot and the guard are standing by. As for to-night," she added with a smile, " I am afraid I must leave that to you. I thought that possibly one of your married officers might introduce me to his wife and allow me to spend the night at his house. I could, of course, go to a hotel."

" Yes, and have the Commissioner of Police himself inquiring who you were. We must think of something better than that."

After a pause Hardy continued : " It happens, Princess, that there is no woman at the present moment in Calcutta whom we can trust. A dreadful confession, isn't it ? The wives of all my personal friends are at home—and I have no wife. But I can place a house at your disposal for the night ; and although you will be the only person in it, I can guarantee that you will be as safe as if you were in your brother's palace."

" Bayard and I don't live in the palace, you

know," she said lightly. "We really live in a bungalow adjoining. So a house will seem quite homelike to me. And I have absolute confidence, Colonel Hardy, in your ability to take care of me."

Their eyes met. "That," he said gravely, "is the highest compliment that has ever been paid me. Now, if you will allow me, I will send for my second-in-command. As for me, I must act at once on the news you have brought."

He switched on the automatic telephone and spoke into it.

"Is that you, Bellingham? Do you mind coming here for a moment—on urgent and confidential business."

He turned from the telephone. "I am going to commit your safety to Major Bellingham," he said. "We shall meet, I hope, to-morrow, when I shall have a message for your brother which I shall ask you to deliver. In the meantime I hope you will be comfortable, and I know you will be safe."

A quick step outside, the door was flung open, and Major Bellingham entered—a fair, florid, wholesome-looking man of thirty, with the brightest of blue eyes, the yellowest of small moustaches, and the most dapper of soldierly figures. A cheery, debonair personality, a contrast in most ways to his commanding officer, whom she found to be rather severe. Bellingham was a share broker in private life.

Hardy rose to his height. "Princess Roshanara," he said, "permit me to present Major Bellingham. Bellingham, the Princess Roshanara of Jehanabad——"

"*Alias* Sister Rosamund of the St John Ambulance Association," interrupted the Princess.

"I haven't forgotten her, Your Highness," rejoined Hardy. "Bellingham, the Princess has just flown from Jehanabad to give us information of

great importance. She has left her plane beyond Chandernagore, and proposes to fly back to-morrow. In the meantime I shall be grateful if you will place your house in Alipore at her disposal for the night. It is desirable, of course, that her incognito should be strictly preserved."

"Certainly," came the quick reply. "You can have the entire house, Your Highness, and I will sleep here. I have a good lot of servants, and I daresay I can get hold of my wife's ayah—my wife, unfortunately, is at home."

"Thank you, Major Bellingham, but I am perfectly well able to look after myself. Ayahs talk—and I am armed."

"Apropos," said Hardy, "will you put a guard upon the house, Bellingham—double sentries at both entrances, with orders to prevent anyone entering by day except ourselves, and to cut down anyone attempting to enter by night."

"This is rather like going back to purdah," laughed the Princess. "Do you really think, Colonel Hardy, that it is necessary to take such tremendous care of me?"

"I have to consider your brother," he answered, with his rare smile. "One moment, Bellingham—excuse us, Princess. Are there any likely men amongst the latest applicants?"

"Yes, sir; there is one very promising fellow from Simpson & Company—James Montgomery, a Rugger Blue and International, who captained the Cambridge Fifteen two years ago."

"H'm—the Rugger Blue tends to brawn rather than to brain, doesn't he?"

"Possibly, but I think you will find Montgomery an exception to the rule. He is really an able youngster—chock-full of intelligence, keen as mustard, and as powerful as a young horse."

"I am glad to hear it. I require one or two

really intelligent lads near me, who can take important messages without having them spelt out."

He turned to the Princess. "Good-bye, Your Highness—or rather, fortunately for us—au revoir. We shall meet, if you will be ready, at six to-morrow morning. Bellingham, I shall hold you personally responsible for the Princess's comfort and safety. Good-day."

III.

As soon as they had gone Willis appeared. "Will you take the afternoon batch now, sir?" he inquired.

Hardy nodded, and Jim was admitted. His reception somewhat disconcerted him. As he advanced to the table Hardy raised his head and stared at him—there was no other word for it. He noted with surprise that the Colonel's eyes were not the hard grey he had somehow imagined they must be, but a light blue, shining with an intense light. For several seconds the scrutiny continued. Then just as Montgomery was about to ask him what the devil he was staring at, he was disarmed by a wholly delightful smile.

"Sit down, Mr Montgomery," said Hardy, indicating a chair to the right of his table. "I have your application by me, but have not had an opportunity of considering it."

He picked up a paper and glanced at it.

"Fettes—scholar of King's—captain of Cambridge Fifteen—International—Lieutenant O.T.C., Sergeant Middlesex Yeomanry—a fine useful record," he commented. "Did you take the Tripos?"

"Yes, sir, a second division in Classics."

"I take it, then, you have read Cæsar?"

"Yes, sir, I know him fairly well."

"What struck you about the Gallic War?"

"Well, sir, the three things that impressed me

most about Cæsar—speaking off-hand—were, first his clearness and directness, second his fairness, and thirdly his humour."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hardy, with a pleased expression. "You noticed that, did you?" He looked hard at Jim again, and noted with approval the splendid lines of his stalwart figure, his square jaw, his broad forehead, and his honest, steadfast, grey eyes. It was a face to like and trust. Hardy felt drawn to him on the spot.

"Well, Montgomery," he said, "you seem to have all the makings of a good soldier; but there are one or two other matters to be considered before you can become a Roughrider."

Now for it, thought Jim. Now comes the tug-of-war. Can I possibly pass the test?

"Service with us," Hardy continued, "is not mere volunteering. It is not even soldiering. It is crusading. We are all under a vow. You will be required to take it should you join us. That is why I pass every applicant myself. I must be certain about every man I command. You have only been in the country a few days, I see, but these few days must have shown to a man of your intelligence that the present situation—political and commercial—is impossible. Owing to communistic and seditious propaganda, existence has already become intolerable for the British in the country districts, and it is rapidly becoming so in Calcutta and in the other big centres. I say that that is not right. The British in India are the only factor which holds India together. Without us the whole country would go to pieces. It is our job to go on holding it together—but we can't do that unless we can stop the lawlessness which is now going on, and which is being actually fostered by the Government and by the highest courts in the land.

"On top of the chronic, social, and commercial

war which is being levied upon us, the native army is preparing to mutiny. I have every reason to believe that this will come to a head in a few days. The Government has hitherto ignored all warnings, and is at the present moment even more scattered and helpless than it was when the Mutiny broke out a hundred years ago.

"Montgomery!"—and the deep voice vibrated—"the time has come when the Empire must be saved by a few determined men. The British auxiliary corps in Calcutta, with the Roughriders at their head, have bound themselves to put a stop to this chaos, and to prevent the surrender of the Empire through the folly and cowardice of the unworthy Englishmen who now govern us. We shall do it at all costs—even if we have to upset this Government and take matters into our own hands. We are all armed and thoroughly organised, and we have every confidence in our ability to hold Bengal at least against all-comers. We may, of course, be wrong. We may be overwhelmed in this Presidency as we are only too likely to be overwhelmed in the north. But if we are, there are some of us who will not survive it. We have taken up arms, never to lay them down until British supremacy has been restored, or until we are all scuppered.

"Now perhaps you understand why I am giving you fair warning before enrolling you in the corps which I command. This is going to be no picnic. It will be a whole-time job from the moment you are sworn in. It will mean active service in a few weeks—possibly a few days, if not sooner. Nor will it be simple, straightforward active service, with a possible M.C. or D.S.O. at the end of it. It may lead us into political complications which may expose us—me certainly—to the risk of being hanged by our own Government, even if we escape the bullets of the enemy. You have—I won't say much to lose,

because if the revolution succeeds, not a single Britisher will be left alive in India, and every penny we have saved or invested will be confiscated. But you have undoubtedly something to lose by joining us, and little or nothing to gain. You must remember that there is nothing our dear old stupid country hates like being saved unofficially from its own blunders. And there is no one that it hates like its self-appointed rescuers. So that those who are in this movement have the cheerful prospect of taking all the kicks and getting none of the ha'pence—that is, if all goes well. And if it does not go well, we shall meet our fate a little sooner than some of the others—that is all.

"Now, Montgomery, what do you say to it? Are you a recruit for our forlorn hope?"

"By God, sir!" exclaimed Jim, stirred to the depths and bringing his fist down on the table, "there's nothing in the world like a forlorn hope!"

"You are right, Montgomery; and how have you found it out?"

"Well, sir, it seems to me that the odds are very much what they were when Cambridge went out against the New Zealanders in 1954, not one of them under six two, and swift and rough in proportion. They had beaten every side that had met them, and the betting was two to one against us. And although we made sure we were for it, we took the field absolutely revelling in the prospect of putting up at least the best fight an English team had given them. I don't know whether you remember the game, sir, but we just beat them by two points."

"*Prosit omen!*" smiled Hardy, not unaffected by the boy's enthusiasm. "Well, that is settled. Now let us get to business. I want you to understand that from the moment you take the oath—which is in an unusual form for reasons which I have partly explained to you—you are a whole-

time soldier, under orders to which I demand implicit obedience. You will presently report yourself to Major Craster, the Adjutant, who will swear you in and put you through your paces. As I daresay you know, we have a machine-gun section and an aero section as well as our main body, which is light cavalry. Major Craster will indicate the work which he thinks you should do; and afterwards I will post you to the section which I think you should join. You should get into uniform at once."

Jim waited, wondering if he should consider himself dismissed. After a brief pause Hardy handed him a paper and said, "That is the oath which you will be called upon to take. Having taken it, you will be under the sternest military discipline for an indefinite period. But, while I and the officers under me will require implicit obedience from you, I want you to realise that this is a corps of gentlemen, and off the parade ground I should like you to regard me as a friend. As Henry V. expressed it on the eve of Agincourt, we are a band of brothers, and I hope and believe that those of us who survive this gruelling—if any of us do—are going to be bound to each other for life."

Colonel Hardy now waited for Jim to read through the prescribed oath, which was as follows :—

> "On admission to the Company of Roughriders, I.....do hereby swear that I will devote my entire time and energies to the service of my country and the British Empire; that I will obey even to the death every order of my Commanding Officer or of those set under him in authority; that I will never divulge any orders or information given to me without permission; that I will at all times comport myself as a Christian and a gentleman; and that I will remain under arms

so long as I am physically and mentally fit, until peace and order have been definitely re-established. So help me God."

Jim bowed gravely and handed back the paper. "I am ready to subscribe to that, sir," he said.

"Very good," said Hardy. "You are admitted. Go and report yourself at once."

IV.

At six o'clock next morning Colonel Hardy's twelve-cylindered Wage-Price car drew up at the gates of Major Bellingham's comfortable house at Alipore. It contained Hardy himself, his second in command, and an orderly, in addition to his military chauffeur. Passing the outer sentry, who recognised them in the growing light and saluted, they walked up the drive and were challenged by the sentry in the porch, where the light was dim. Bellingham gave the password, and they proceeded into the lighted hall. Here they were met by the Princess, her tall figure still clad in nurse's dress. She smiled graciously as the two officers saluted.

"I have slept beautifully," she said in answer to their inquiries, "and am quite ready for my return journey."

"Then, Princess, if you have had your *chota hazri*, you and Major Bellingham had better start," said Hardy. "You should be at Chandernagore in little more than an hour from now."

"I am only waiting for your message," she replied, as they moved to the car at the gate.

"It is this, Princess. The Sultan himself and the Princes who are acting with him should hold themselves in readiness to move on Delhi as soon as definite news of the outbreak reaches him. Allowing for possible delays and difficulties, they

should concentrate in the neighbourhood of Delhi in a week from the day of mobilisation. They should attach themselves to any British force which may still be in being at or near Delhi, and should act in concert with it. Your brother and I will remain in communication with each other by wireless code, so that each can come to the help of the other if need arises or developments will allow. Tell him again that my first duty is to Calcutta, for the loss of Calcutta means the loss of India. Have you got that ? "

" I think so," Roshanara replied. " Bayard and the loyal Princes must be before Delhi within a week of the outbreak, and must co-operate with the British forces there, if there are any. You will help him if you can, and he is to help you if he can. Calcutta is your first care."

" Packed into half my wordage," he commented with a pleased smile, as he helped her into the car. " There is only one more point, and it is perhaps the most important. The mine may explode several days before the appointed time. Don't forget that on any account. Now, Bellingham, it is time to start. Good-bye, Princess, and God bless you ! "

He saluted as the car moved away. Hardly had Bellingham's hand dropped from his salute than Roshanara spoke.

" Couldn't we have taken Colonel Hardy back to headquarters ? " she asked.

" He will go back in my car, Your Highness," was the reply. " We must make straight for the Cossipore bridge."

They sped through the awakening streets to the Hooghly River, crossed it by one of the finest cantilever bridges in the world, and in less than a quarter of an hour were flying along the Grand Trunk Road, past Lillooah and Bally, where a fine

railway bridge again spans the Hooghly; past Serampore with its college and its early Danish settlement; until, in fifty minutes or so, they found themselves on the outskirts of the French town of Chandernagore.

Chandernagore is the second largest of the French possessions in India. The settlement runs along the banks of the Hooghly for three or four miles, and extends inland about half a mile. The town of Chandernagore itself is a sleepy little place which just misses being picturesque, and its chief importance lies in the jute mills—British owned—which have been set up just outside the town limits, so as to be free of British factory laws. It is entirely surrounded by British territory, and used to be regularly annexed whenever there was trouble between England and France, and as regularly handed back at the end of hostilities. It is an Alsatia for British debtors, who from its sanctuary can defy their creditors, so long as they remain in Chandernagore. Its Governor receives the salary of a poorly paid assistant in a British firm, its garrison consists of a corporal's guard, which is reported to exchange uniforms as often as the sentries are relieved. Its police force in 1957 was not nearly sufficient to deal with the jute mill labour force.

As the Wage-Price car neared Chandernagore the pace slackened, and Roshanara kept an anxious lookout for her plane.

"It ought to be hereabouts," she said, when they were about half a mile from the town. "Oh, Major Bellingham, what is that barrier for?" pointing to a rough bamboo fence stretching right across the road almost immediately ahead of them.

Approaching the barrier, they noticed that it was held by a small force of British armed (native) police. As the car halted, a Bengali inspector came up to it and saluted.

"Good morning, inspector," said Bellingham, returning the salute. "What is the trouble, and why are you holding up the Grand Trunk Road?"

The inspector, like most officers of his class and grade, spoke excellent English.

"There has been a serious disturbance in French territory, sir," he replied. "The mill hands at Brindaban mill broke out last evening, attacked and totally destroyed an aeroplane which had come down in the neighbourhood of the mill, and killed two men who were guarding it."

"Killed them!" exclaimed Roshanara, turning pale. "Oh, surely they haven't done that?"

"Either killed them, madam, or left them for dead," said the inspector. "But the victims have been removed to Chandernagore hospital, and I did not see them myself."

"But," asked Bellingham, "what has this outbreak got to do with the British military police, and why are you holding the road?"

"The reason is, sir, that the French authorities are afraid of the mill hands. The force at their own disposal is inadequate, and they informed us last night that they might have to call upon us for assistance. They are reluctant to do so if they can avoid it, and in the meantime they have pacified the mill mob. But our Inspector-General has thought it well to close the main approaches to the town, and I am under orders to prevent anybody from entering French territory by the Grand Trunk Road."

"But not by some other road?" asked the Princess, who was obviously finding it difficult to restrain her emotion. "Major Bellingham, we must get into Chandernagore somehow, and find out what has happened to Mozaffur and Ayam Khan."

Out came the inspector's note-book. "The plane was yours, was it, madam?" he inquired smoothly.

"Will you kindly give me your name and address and any other particulars in your power?"

"Another time, inspector," broke in Bellingham. "At present we cannot wait. We must get to Chandernagore by another road. The plane doesn't belong to this lady, but was awaiting urgent orders from me. The matter is very important, and I cannot wait to explain. I am Major Bellingham of the Roughriders. Come along, Your—Sister Rosamund. We have no time to lose."

The inspector saluted and did not attempt to pursue his inquiries, as the car was backed away from the barrier and turned. It was easy enough to discover another, although a narrower, road into Chandernagore, but they found it a more difficult matter to enter the town. Every road leading into it had been barricaded, and from the other side of the barrier which confronted them as they reached its first line of houses, a scared Bengali police officer gazed at them apprehensively. Unlike the British inspector, he spoke hardly any English. It appeared, however, from what he was able to tell them, that the authorities in Chandernagore were living in hourly expectation of an attack from several thousand mill hands; and as the total police and military force at the disposal of the Governor numbered less than a hundred, they could only barricade the entrances and pray for a favourable result.

Such being the situation from his point of view, the police officer was naturally reluctant to break down his barrier in order to let the car pass. Major Bellingham, however, succeeded eventually in overcoming both his fears and his scruples, and the barrier was partially demolished to afford them a passage.

Another two minutes brought them to the Residency, a long, low, E-shaped building on the pleasant

esplanade which fronts the river. Here, after some delay, a young and harassed Secretary, who introduced himself as M. Leblanc, received them. He had obviously just got up, after spending the night in his clothes, and was unshaven and dishevelled. Fortunately, however, he spoke English with tolerable fluency.

In reply to Major Bellingham, he was launching into an account of the mill emeute when Roshanara cut him short.

"Tell me, M. Leblanc," she broke in, "what has happened to my two poor servants? Are they still alive?"

"Madam is, then, the owner of the burned aeroplane?" asked the Secretary suavely. "We have been anxious to find the owner, as there was nothing to indicate it on the remains of the plane, or on the persons of the two men who were in charge of it."

"I am the Princess Roshanara of Jehanabad," she replied. "I was flying to Calcutta, but was forced to land near here. The two men in charge of the machine were servants of my brother, the Sultan. What has happened to them?"

The Secretary bowed. "I regret to inform Your Highness," he said, "that one of them, apparently a personal servant or bearer from his dress, has succumbed to his injuries. The other, who seems to be a flying officer, is still alive but is unconscious. It is doubtful whether he will recover. The wonder is that he is still alive after the ferocious handling he received."

The Princess turned away her face to hide her emotion. Bellingham intervened, asking for a full account of the incident.

"These mill people have been giving us a lot of trouble," said the Secretary. "You are doubtless aware of the propaganda which has been going on in British territory, and naturally it has been no

respecter of frontiers. Arms have been recently smuggled into the mills, and the lives of the European manager and his assistants have become less safe than they were before—which is saying a good deal. Last evening the entire labour force of the Brindaban mill were greatly excited by the landing of Your Highness' plane near their mill. The rumour went round that it was an attempt on the part of the British authorities to seize their arms, and a lot of them rushed out to see it, and hustled the two men in charge. The flying officer refused to answer any questions, which, of course, increased their suspicions; and eventually drew his revolver upon them.

"Just what dear old hasty Ayam Khan would do," murmured the Princess.

"They then rushed the plane," continued the Secretary. "Two of them were shot down, but Your Highness' servants were overpowered, the plane was wrecked, and the two unfortunate men were battered almost to pieces. One man died on the spot, the other is in hospital here. The mob retreated when our police appeared on the scene, which was fortunate, as our force is far too small to cope with such an outbreak. But, as you know, they do not settle down easily after they have tasted blood; and we have been obliged to block all the approaches to the town, for if they attack it in force we shall have the utmost difficulty in keeping them out."

"I must see the wounded man," said Roshanara, who by this time had recovered herself.

"I will escort Your Highness to the hospital myself," said the official, with ready politeness.

The town of Chandernagore is about the size of the average English village, and in a very few minutes the Wage-Price car had deposited the party at the long, one-storied, white-washed building

which did duty for its general hospital. There were one or two private rooms, but at the first glance it looked as though the entire hospital consisted of one public ward; and there lay Ayam Khan, deathly still, and so swathed in bandages that Roshanara found it difficult to identify him.

She bent low over his bed and called the wounded man by name in tones which made Bellingham almost envious. There was no response, and the Anglo-Indian surgeon who had received them shook his head.

"He is quite unconscious, madam," he said. "He is not likely to recover consciousness for days—if ever."

Roshanara touched the silent figure tenderly. "You will keep me informed of his progress, please," she said, and took out a large sum of money in currency notes from a bag she was carrying. "Please send a wireless message to Jehanabad every day, and use the balance for the benefit of the hospital."

The surgeon bowed. The party returned to the car, and carried M. Leblanc back to the Residency. He pressed them to stay to *déjeuner*, assuring them that Monsieur l'Administrateur would be charmed to meet them. The Princess, speaking both for herself and the entirely acquiescent Bellingham, declined.

"Some time later, monsieur," she said, "I shall hope to return and thank you for all your care of my poor men; but now urgent business calls me back to Calcutta."

There was no difficulty about passing the town barricade on the return journey, and they motored rapidly back to the Grand Trunk Road, rejoining it at a point nearer to Calcutta than the barrier thrown across it by the Bengal armed police. Speeding towards Calcutta they encountered a further

reinforcement of the armed police, which was obviously on its way to the barrier. Very smart and efficient did the little Gurkhas composing it look, in their slouch hats, khaki tunics with full bandoliers, bare, sturdy knees, and legs swathed in putties. They were marching at ease, their deadly kukris worn as side-arms, and their rifles slung over their shoulders muzzle foremost, as Indian troops love to carry them.

"Major Bellingham," said Roshanara, rousing herself from a reverie as they rushed through Serampore, "where are we going now? And what am I going to do?"

"We are returning naturally to my house," answered Bellingham. "And what Your Highness does will depend largely upon the arrangements we may be able to make about another plane. But at the very earliest you cannot start for Jehanabad before to-morrow; and it will therefore be necessary for you to spend another night in Calcutta—if you will so far honour my poor house."

"It is the very opposite of a poor house," she retorted; and glancing at her he wondered whether she were smiling through her tears. There was a pause.

"Yes, I suppose you are right," she said. "But it increases the risk of complications—if the Calcutta authorities get to know that I am here, and that it is my plane which has been destroyed."

"We run these risks every day of our lives," Bellingham answered her. "One more or less won't matter — and if it did ——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor Colonel Hardy," sighed the Princess. "It will be a dreadful shock to him. He was getting rid of me so quickly and easily this morning—and now I am back on his hands like the proverbial bad shilling."

"I shouldn't waste any pity on the Colonel, Your Highness," was the dry answer. "He rises to every occasion."

v.

At twelve o'clock that day Roshanara, having returned to Major Bellingham's house, wirelessed to her brother in code telling him what had happened. She had changed her nurse's uniform for one of her ordinary dresses, and was awaiting the khansamah's summons to a late breakfast, when she was called up on the telephone.

"Is that Princess Roshanara? Hardy speaking. I am distressed to hear of the catastrophe at Chandernagore——"

"I thought you would be," replied Roshanara.

"I have been wondering what would be the best plan for you. I don't think we can ask you to spend another night alone at Alipore. Besides, there is now no point in trying to preserve your incognito. From what Bellingham tells me, it is obvious that the French authorities will already have wirelessed your identity to Calcutta, and the police are probably already looking out for you."

"Will that lead to complications?" asked Roshanara in rather a troubled voice.

"Not really, Princess, but your admitted connection with the wrecked aeroplane will undoubtedly call for some explanation. So I have taken the bull by the horns and have given your address to Government House. I understand that an A.D.C. is already on his way to you to escort you there as a guest."

"Colonel Hardy!" she exclaimed, "surely Government House is the last place I should go to just now. You are sending me right into the enemy's camp. And what am I to say about the aeroplane?"

"I must leave that to your woman's wit, Princess," came his answer, "and for the rest it may

not be a bad thing for us to have a friend in the enemy's camp. Another thing—Lady Bowles is a very different proposition from her husband, and I doubt whether she believes in playing with fire. I feel sure you will find her a kindred spirit. Goodbye. I trust we may meet again soon."

"I hope so—but when?" said Roshanara to herself, replacing the receiver with a slight frown. She was somewhat piqued at this summary method of disposing of her, and perhaps a little disappointed that Hardy had not found time to come himself to see her. Then she told herself that he had far too many other things to think about, and commended him for his boldness in sending her to Government House—the last place where anyone would expect to find a person who was in league with an anti-Government organisation. She also felt flattered by his suggestion that she could be of service to the movement. Lastly, she bethought herself of what she should say when questioned as to the reasons for her flying visit to Calcutta.

By the time the A.D.C. arrived she had decided that Hardy had acted in every way for the best, and that Fate or Providence had cast her for a part in the coming drama which promised to be full of interest, and possibly of importance.

CHAPTER FIVE.

I.

In little more than an hour from his dismissal by Colonel Hardy, Jim Montgomery had been sworn in, put into uniform, posted temporarily to the cavalry section of the Roughriders, and had passed his riding school test. The next day he drilled, and on Wednesday he was to have been mounted, but no remounts had arrived, and he was dismissed for the day. Finding himself at a 'loose end' in the afternoon, he suddenly bethought himself of the much-advertised meeting of the Legislative Council —a meeting the chief object of which, he had been told, was to demand that the Roughriders and all the other European corps should be disbanded and disarmed. If he had been older—if he had had a few more days under Roughrider discipline,—it would probably never have occurred to him that it would be interesting to assist at the obsequies of his own corps. But he was both young and new to the country; and he thought he could kill two birds with one stone; while away an afternoon that threatened to be boring, and acquaint himself at first-hand with the Bengali politicians who were at war with the British Empire in India.

As it happened, his visit to the Legislative Council had important results, not only personal, but political. This will appear from his own narrative, written a year or two after the Mutiny, which is now given, together with his partly naïve and partly shrewd comments on the situation.

To suppose [he writes] that all these military preparations could go on without exciting attention would have been optimistic. Neither Hardy, nor,

indeed, any of us were under any illusion as to that. Calcutta had become a vast camp. The maidan was dotted all over with tents. From morning till night the various corps of volunteers were exercised upon it—not, as in ordinary times, in the morning only. More than half the Englishmen (and Scotsmen) in the city had gone permanently into khaki. They had, of course, an excellent excuse. There was nothing else for them to do ; business was practically at a standstill.

It need hardly be said that the Governor of Bengal and his satellites, together with the loud-voiced Bengali politicians who dominated the legislative body and aspired to rule the country, looked on these demonstrations with anything but friendly eyes. They felt instinctively that these armed Britons meant business ; that the scheme for handing over India to the Indians was likely to be more complicated than they hoped it might be. The perfect good nature and discipline of the merchants and shop assistants in uniform disconcerted them ; they had no excuse for interfering.

But they did what they could. His Excellency asked General Stewart, in command of the Presidency, what he thought of all this drilling.

" I think it's a damned fine thing, sir," the warrior replied. " I only wish they had started it a year ago. However, better late than never."

" But is it necessary ? " asked the Governor.

" Of course it is—never more so than now, when the Indian has been so pampered that he has lost all sense of proportion. Besides, it is good for all these young fellows — keeps 'em out of mischief."

" I only hope it does," said His Excellency to himself. The General's retort had, however, shown him that no help was to be obtained from that source, and he hesitated to take any action on his

own initiative; he feared it might lead to an explosion, and this he assuredly did not want.

The politicians were less discreet. They were playing for bigger stakes than the Governor knew. They had seen British authority and prestige dwindle almost to vanishing point—the garrison in the Fort reduced to three companies. They had seen the British ousted from one official preserve after another, and practically driven from the smaller towns and the country districts. They had seen the railways, the posts and telegraphs and other utilities pass into Indian hands, with hardly a protest, and they knew of a widespread conspiracy which could hardly fail to complete the ruin of British authority. When that took place they saw themselves masters of Bengal: how long the Gurkhas and the other fighting races would permit them to remain masters did not trouble them. Their short-sighted outlook did not reach beyond the discomfiture of the British.

They grew more and more restive as the time planned for the revolt drew nearer. So far as Calcutta was concerned, the fact of a large armed force of Britons, perfectly good-natured but obviously meaning business, was a serious obstacle to their plans, and they accordingly set to work in their own way to procure their disbandment.

Their first step was to approach the Governor, who, from motives parallel to but not quite so deep as their own, was no less anxious to head off John Hardy and his associates. Finding that His Excellency had already sounded General Stewart unsuccessfully as to the feasibility of stopping all military preparations, they fell back upon a still more convenient method of putting pressure upon the Government—the Bengal Legislature.

The Bengal Legislature at that time consisted of two bodies—the Council and the Chamber of Representatives. The Council was a small body of twenty-

four elder statesmen mainly representing the land-holding interests; while the Chamber consisted of one hundred and twenty members, who, with the exception of a dozen Europeans, were elected on a popular franchise, and were ready to do anything to embarrass or destroy the British Government. They had already in large measure succeeded, were full of confidence, not to say insolence, and under-rated in an absurd manner the difficulties to be overcome if the hated British were to be overthrown.

I found out afterwards that these politicians represented nobody but themselves. There were hundreds of thousands of perfectly loyal contented Bengalis who preferred the British 'yoke' to any other, and were specially afraid of coming under the unfettered rule of their own countrymen! Why, then, did they allow the politicians to vilify the British and intrigue against them? Because they were afraid to oppose them! That, as a matter of fact, is the trouble with most people. The man who shouts loud enough will always obtain a hearing, and if he utters threats, a surprising number of people will follow him—especially in Bengal.

II.

The debate in the Bengal Chamber of Representatives had tremendous repercussions. It forced Hardy's hand and hastened the general catastrophe. It is Gilbertian as one looks back and thinks what vital consequences flowed from the resolution which was carried on the 5th November 1957—significant date!—and from the flatulent efforts of the spectacled orators who rose one after another to denounce 'the military menace' which had sprung up on the Calcutta maidan. But I must not anticipate.

Having nothing better to do that afternoon I thought I should like to hear the debate. It would

also be a good opportunity to study at close quarters the men who aspired to pull down the Empire in Bengal. Accordingly I took a bus down to the fine legislative building standing between the old Town Hall and the Eden Gardens. There was an immense crowd of Bengalis, all of them young, and most of them students, I imagine. They clustered round the entrance and thronged the steps of the legislative building, cheering their favourites as they arrived, and looking in their flowing white robes rather like the crowds of Roman citizens in ' Julius Cæsar '—except that the Romans did not carry umbrellas. I was apparently the only Britisher in the crowd—certainly the only man in khaki.

Naturally I was rather a conspicuous object, and everybody eyed me with the utmost disfavour. I even caught such remarks as " foreign soldier," " military spy," and other compliments in English, interspersed with the sibilant Bengali which filled the air about me. I took no notice of these remarks, but pushed my way to the main entrance. Here I was stopped by a barrier, to say nothing of a sergeant of police—incidentally the only other European in sight.

" 'Ere, you," he said, without any ceremony, " wot are you doin' 'ere, trooper ? Got a ticket of admission ? "

" I'm afraid I haven't," said I, cursing my imbecility at not having thought of this obvious requirement, while some of the Bengalis around me set up a shout of laughter.

" Well, then yer carn't go in, that's all," retorted the sergeant, and added in a lower tone, " An' wot's more, mate, I don't think you're missin' much either. I know I'd rather be watchin' any old cricket match on the maidan."

" I say, can't I get in as a policeman or a special constable ? " I asked, feeling all the more desirous

of forcing an entrance because the student crowd around us was obviously gloating over my discomfiture.

The sergeant shook his head. "Nothin' doin'," he replied. "Good arternoon, sir"—this to an elderly Englishman in smart morning dress who now approached. I knew him well enough by sight—old Harrison, the senior partner in Bright & Co.; but, of course, he did not know me from Adam. The policeman promptly stood aside to let him pass, and I concluded that he must be one of the half-dozen non-official English members of the Chamber. He glanced at me as he passed, and I saluted.

"I'm exceedingly sorry to trouble you, sir," said I, "but I wonder whether you could admit me to hear the debate."

He stopped and threw at me a look of slight amusement.

"A Roughrider in the Strangers' Gallery, eh?" he remarked. "Almost as good as Daniel and the lions. It's a pity there aren't a few more of you; we want a Pride's Purge badly. As it happens, I have a card of admission on me, as the friend who wanted it can't come. What's your name?"

"James Montgomery, sir."

"Not the Cambridge Blue and Rugger International?"

"That is so."

"My dear fellow, delighted to oblige you. And a deuced useful recruit for the Roughriders. Here is your card. I don't suppose you can make out my fist, but my name is Harrison—Walter Harrison, one of the small and hopeless English minority in the Chamber who are going to be smothered this afternoon, first by Baboo eloquence, and next when the question is put. That will be all right, sergeant. Good afternoon, Mr—that is to say, Trooper Montgomery."

So I sailed in triumphantly, not without a backward glance at the crowd that had been jeering at me. I mounted the great staircase and found my way to the Strangers' Gallery, in which my khaki uniform created a sensation. I was indeed the only military person in the Gallery, which was held in great strength by Bengalis, male and female, with a sprinkling of Europeans well past middle life. In the President's Gallery were two distinguished-looking women, attended by a fellow in uniform, who was obviously an A.D.C. The elder of the two ladies I rightly conjectured to be Lady Bowles, the wife of the Governor. The younger one—a strikingly beautiful Indian—I couldn't place at first, although I knew I had seen her before. At last I remembered! She was the handsome nurse who had come out of Colonel Hardy's room while I was waiting for my interview. I felt certain then that she was somebody by the way she walked and held her head. Now, in her semi-Indian dress she looked a Zenobia. Who she was I did not discover till afterwards—indeed, after she had helped to save my life—the Princess Roshanara of Jehanabad.

I looked down into the Chamber, which presented the usual semicircle of desks and seats ranged round the President's platform. More than a hundred members were present—there was, in fact, as full an attendance as had been known. The Swarajists were in an overwhelming majority, and they were all arrayed in the white flowing robes which represent the national costume of Bengal. Many of them were lawyers who, in the ordinary course of their business, would wear coat and trousers; but here in the Chamber they were pure patriots, to whom the foreign garb was taboo.

I confess that for the most part I did not like their faces—nearly all very dark, fat, and unpleasant-looking. Here and there was a keen intellectual

profile, but the majority of the Swarajist representatives were unlovely creatures, with raucous voices, eyes that stared through thick gold-rimmed spectacles, and obese flabby physique.

In a corner to the left of the President sat the small group of non-official English members, one or two of whom were young, the rest middle-aged. They sat silent; the others were chattering in English and in the vernacular.

Suddenly there was a hush. An official approached from behind the chair and called out, "The Honourable the President." In came three native servants —*chobdars*, I afterwards learned to call them— carrying staves and dressed in bright scarlet and gold. Following them a stout figure—the Rajah of Bhowanipore—enveloped in a black gown, with knee-breeches and full-bottomed wig complete. The Rajah was a man about forty-five years of age, with a stolid good-humoured face which was not without a certain decision.

We all stood up as the President sank into the chair. After a little preliminary skirmishing a fat Swarajist—Baboo Pashupati Sanyal—rose to introduce the question of the day.

"Mr President, sar," he said, "I beg to ask Honble senior member of Government (he said 'Gauverment') a question of which I have given him private notice—namely, have any steps been taken or will any steps be taken to check the movements of armed European volunteers on the maidan?"

This question brought up the Hon. Mr Beverley, senior member of the Government, a tall thin man with an aquiline nose, and a tired and cynical smile. Except for the Governor himself, he was the only English member of the Government, the other two members of Council being Bengalis. He was believed to hate his present job, and to be counting the days

until he could gracefully resign. A really strong man would have done so long ere this. Meanwhile he concealed his chagrin under a bland manner and a cynical smile.

" The answer, sir," he said, " is in the negative."

Up sprang Pashupati Baboo, registering indignant amazement and patriotic protest.

" Then, sir," cried he, " I demand suspension of ordinary rules of business in order that this Chamber may express its views upon this gross outrage upon public propriety and civil liberty——"

" Order, order," the President intervened. " No honourable member is entitled to demand suspension of the rules. It is solely within the competence of the President. I may say that I am not prepared to consider the question of suspending them unless I am asked to by the representative of the Government."

Up rose the Honourable Mr Beverley. " Let me say at once, sir," said he, " that the Government have no objection whatever to the ventilation of this matter, and I beg to move the suspension of the rules."

Motion put and carried, after which Mr Pashupati Sanyal got his innings. He rose to move :—

" That this Chamber views with the utmost apprehension the warlike attitude of a certain section of the European community ; that the arming and drilling of thousands of Englishmen in the heart of Calcutta is a menace to the law, order, and peace of the city ; and that this Chamber calls upon the Government of Bengal to intervene and to put a stop to these practices."

The whole thing was a ' put up job ' (this came to light later) between the Government, the President, and the Swarajists, and the little scene I had just witnessed was to all intents and purposes an elaborately staged farce. Everything had been arranged ;

Beverley had the terms of Pashupati Baboo's resolution in his pocket, and had been ordered by His Excellency to give him an opportunity of moving it.

III.

Nothing had struck me more in Calcutta than the fluency of the average Bengali in expressing himself in English. His accent was generally clipped, but he was never at a loss for a word, and his idiom was usually unexceptionable. In his business and public functions and also in his games, he seemed to think in English. Even now, after I had been several weeks in the country, I couldn't get over the wonder of this Bengali Parliament, conducting its debates entirely in a foreign tongue, presided over by a Speaker with a dark complexion and a full-bottomed wig. There seemed to be something strained and exotic about the whole show; and as I looked on I seemed to realise the unreality and hollowness of the attempt to graft the most characteristic of British institutions upon these Indian conditions.

But Mr Pashupati Sanyal certainly made the most of his opportunity. He was a typical Bengali politician—fat, clean-shaven, with gold-rimmed spectacles, a metallic voice which never seemed to tire, and a dramatic delivery. I couldn't possibly reproduce his accent, which spoilt his most eloquent periods so far as I was concerned—and he really waxed quite eloquent,—but most of his hearers in the Chamber and in the gallery appeared not to notice this drawback, and cheered him madly, while the atmosphere of excitement mounted steadily, and the speaker himself became half-intoxicated by it.

The first point which he took was that the existence of a large and permanently armed force in a

peaceful community in time of peace was bound to create excitement and unrest. Here was a body of 10,000 Englishmen—a mild oratorical exaggeration! —who were supposed to be peaceful citizens, but had gone permanently into uniform and passed their whole time in either drilling on the maidan or in route-marching through the streets to the disorganisation of the traffic and the terror of the peaceful inhabitants (cheers and cries of " Shame "). What was the motive for these movements? The Government had not made any demand for additional European troops. This sudden accession of martial zeal on the part of the European community could only be described as a lawless attempt to overawe both the Government and the people. These military bodies were public enemies (loud cheers), and could not be tolerated by any civilised community. It was understood that the Government was helpless in the matter; it seemed to be helpless in a great many matters (laughter), but if the Government did not feel able to put a stop to the nuisance, if not menace, the citizens themselves must take the necessary steps to end it (tremendous cheers).

I am giving a very brief summary of Pashupati Baboo's remarks. He spoke for a good half-hour, working himself and his audience up to a pitch of wild excitement, and when he got to the point of declaring that the citizens themselves must end the drilling, he wisely sat down amidst a hurricane of applause, without committing himself in any way to a *modus operandi*.

The resolution was seconded by another stout exponent of Swaraj, in a speech very similar in texture, although it had gleams of humour. For example, the speaker took special exception to the route marches of the Caledonians and to their bagpipes,

" I have heard these dreadful instruments myself," he said feelingly, " and the impression created in our neighbourhood was that all the devils in hell had broken loose."

If a Caledonian ' Jock ' had been occupying my seat in the gallery, I imagine hell might have broken loose again !

It was a one-sided debate. Swarajist after Swarajist got up and declaimed against " this monstrous military tyranny," this " reign of terror carried on in defiance of the Government," this " insolent parade of racial aggressiveness." I heard all the old clichés : " the boasted palladium of liberty," " this so-called Empire on which the sun never sets," " the brightest jewel in the British Crown," " India's Magna Charta "—that is to say, Queen Victoria's Proclamation of 1858. Speaker after speaker arose and denounced the Roughriders, the Caledonians, the Fencibles, &c., and demanded their disbandment. I got tired of the spate of oratory, but the Chamber enjoyed it like anything, and cheered rapturously, especially when threats were used, and the vaguer the threats the louder the cheers.

At first I had wondered why none of the Europeans in the Chamber got up to speak, but as the debate proceeded I thought I had fathomed the reason—the tiny group of white men was hopelessly outnumbered, and to attempt to gain a hearing in that demented atmosphere would be like addressing the wild sea waves. There was, in point of fact, another reason, and that was that your average Britisher is tongue-tied. But after half a dozen speeches from the Swarajist representatives, a non-official Englishman—or rather a Scot—did rise to his feet. He was a bald-headed, rather commonplace little man with a Dundee accent—Douglas, I learned, was his name,—but he spoke very much to the point.

" I do not suppose anything I can say will affect the result of this debate," he said. " Nevertheless I take it upon myself to put on record why the British community is making these so-called warlike preparations.

" We are acting—as we always have acted ever since the British came to India—solely in self-defence. Our interests are not merely threatened, but have been partly destroyed. Our lives and our liberties have become unsafe. Our women cannot go into the streets without being grossly insulted."

" No, no," came from a number of Swarajist throats. The Chamber was filled with yells and murmurs, and the President called for order. The speaker's eyes flashed and his homely figure, as he faced the opposition, took on a dignity through the force of honest indignation. He waited for silence, and then went on as though he had never been interrupted.

" The Government has ceased to govern. This is a matter which concerns not merely us Europeans, but every Indian citizen of Bengal."

Loud opposition cheers.

" We have accordingly found it useless to appeal to the institution which should ordinarily protect us. The Courts, from the High Court to the smallest subordinate magistrate, are in the hands of our enemies——"

" Mr President ! " exclaimed the Swarajist leader, a tall, sleek barrister named Koilash Ghose, springing to his feet, " is the hon. member in order in insulting the Judges of the High Court by impugning their impartiality ? " There were deafening cheers at this.

" No, he is not," came from the President. " I must ask the hon. member to withdraw that remark."

" I withdraw, sir, of course," said Douglas. " I was only setting forth the considerations which have

forced us to take these precautionary measures. I have now stated them, and will presently sit down. But before I do so, there is one minor point I should like to raise. We Europeans are not the only people who have taken up arms. The party opposite have organised the two battalions of the University Rifles. Are these battalions also to be disbanded ? "

Loud shouts of " No, never ! " from the Swarajists.

" Why not ? " asked Mr Douglas.

Pandemonium ensued. Half the Chamber rose and clamoured. Through the din I caught phrases like " our natural guardians," " our right to bear arms," " this is our country," before order was restored by the furious ringing of the President's bell.

" It comes to this, then," pursued the speaker when order had been restored, " the British are to be disarmed and disbanded, while the Bengalis are to be specially privileged. All I can say is that we shall never agree to that."

As he sat down the Honourable Mr Beverley arose. He had clearly been drawn by the attack on the Government. The half-smile on his sallow face looked remarkably like a sneer, which seemed to become more pronounced as he stood waiting for the Swarajist cheers to die away. It was evident that the demonstrators were fairly confident as to the side which he would take.

The debate, he said, had been interesting, but a trifle stereotyped. As usual, everybody had abused the Government. That, of course, was the Government's main *raison d'être.* In the present case, however, the complaints which had been made were groundless. There was no law inhibiting the European mercantile community from organising itself as it had done ; on the contrary, all the corps referred to formed a part of the military forces of

the country, and were actually subsidised by the Government of India. (Loud cries of "Shame.") The same applied to the two University battalions, which were composed entirely of Bengali students, and there was nothing to prevent the Bengalis from organising themselves and forming other battalions, which would also be readily subsidised by the Central Government.

Here Mr Beverley looked round with his smile, which was indistinguishable from a sneer, and which seemed to deepen at the dead silence that greeted his suggestion.

"So far as the Government of Bengal are concerned," he went on, "there has been no overt occasion for interference. These bodies have been under a discipline which is almost perfect, and I am informed that the few isolated breaches of the peace that have occurred have been drastically punished. There is therefore nothing in the present situation which would justify our intervention.

"But," he looked round sneeringly again, and I could almost see the stiffening of the small European group, "the passing by this Chamber of the resolution now before it would modify the position considerably. What the Government would and does hesitate to do on its own initiative in the circumstances I have touched upon, it might conceivably feel it its duty to do should it find that the representatives of the people are largely opposed to the creation of a standing army in the city of Calcutta."

There was a deafening roar of applause from the Chamber. My friend, Mr Walter Harrison, flung his papers on the desk before him, and rose as if he intended to rush out. But the Englishman next him put his hand warningly upon his arm, and he stayed. The little British group in the Chamber were all very pale, and looking round I could see

consternation upon the few English faces in the gallery.

For at least three minutes the demonstration continued, while the President banged at his bell. Some Swarajists actually mounted their chairs and shouted—

" Down with the British Cromwells ! Disarm the volunteers ! "

Mr Beverley stood for a moment, waiting for the din to subside, with an absolutely unchanged expression ; and then, as if he had suddenly realised that he had no more to say, sat down. A number of enthusiastic Swarajists rushed up to him, and one or two of them almost embraced him.

When quiet was restored the Swarajist leader got up, and I felt instinctively that the debate was about to close. Mr Koilash Ghose, whom I had heard described as the " uncrowned King of Bengal," was a tall fleshy lawyer of forty, who looked younger. His sleek black hair was brushed from the temples in English fashion, and a prominent nose, large protruding teeth, and a receding chin made him look rather like a rodent. Nevertheless his forehead had a look of power, which was assisted by a mellow voice and a faultless delivery.

I am told he had two styles—the eloquent and the sardonic. I never heard him in eloquent vein, because I never heard him again, and on this occasion he chose the sardonic, largely, I imagine, because the other vein had been completely exhausted by previous speakers. He was rapturously cheered on rising, and it was clear that he held unbounded sway over his followers. It is natural, I suppose, that an excitable people like the Bengalis should choose a cool, cynical person to lead them. He spoke without an accent, and I was told that he had been educated at St Paul's and my own university, and was an authority on Shelley.

Mr Ghose began by saying that when he entered the Chamber that afternoon, he was quite undecided as to whether he should vote for the resolution or against it.

(There were roars of laughter at this pleasantry, even the Europeans joining in.)

" But," continued the speaker, " after listening to the debate, I have come to the conclusion that I ought to vote for it (laughter and cheers). I grieve to say that that conclusion has not been influenced by the speeches of my hon. colleagues on this side of the House, eloquent as they were. I have reached it solely through listening to the Hon. Mr Beverley and to Mr Douglas—the only two Englishmen who have spoken.

" I will take the Hon. Mr Beverley's speech first. What is it in effect but an S.O.S. from himself and his colleagues ? As usual, the Government is up a tree ; it is sitting on the fence ; it is in itself unable to do anything or to take any steps. It has appealed to this Chamber to give it a lead. It has indicated that a resolution condemning these terroristic elements in the British community will strengthen its hands to grapple with the evil. It has, in fact, appealed to us to come to its assistance. I am not hard-hearted enough to turn a deaf ear to such an appeal, and I am confident that in this matter I speak for my honourable colleagues " (cheers).

Mr Ghose went on to say that he had listened also with profound sympathy to the speech of Mr Douglas on behalf of the European community. What was the purport of that speech ? That the British citizens of Calcutta were—he was sure for the first time in their lives—in deadly fear of their Bengali fellow-citizens (loud and prolonged cheers from the Swarajists).

" While our regret for that fear is only equalled by our surprise that it should have arisen," he

continued, "let me assure our British fellow-citizens that it is groundless. In order to prove our sincerity, we propose to act upon the Hon. Mr Beverley's hint and to take up arms ourselves, not for the purpose of fighting the British, but to enable us to take care of them. When they are disarmed —as I presume they will be when the Government is backed by the authority of this Chamber to deal with them,—they will doubtless require someone to protect them. We now propose to take that honourable duty upon ourselves. We shall take care of them all right, never fear. Only give us a chance of returning the benefits which they have conferred on us for the past two centuries."

Ghose paused in order to give his followers a chance of emphasising this sardonic undertaking. For a few seconds they seemed to be puzzled, but a glance at his face confirmed the sneering import of his words, and then the Chamber rocked with laughter and applause. Mr Ghose was supposed to have surpassed himself as a master of satirical innuendo; and when it was realised that his object was to threaten the hated British with more or less savage reprisals, the delight of the Swarajists knew no bounds. They rose in their places to cheer their leader, and one of them shook his fist at the small group of English members, screaming out, "Yes, you English tyrants, your turn is coming!"

Ghose, like Beverley, sat down while the cheering was going on, and seeing that one or two obvious bores were preparing to weigh in—of course on the side of the resolution,—the Hon. Mr Beverley moved that the question be put.

The President accepted the motion and put the resolution. "I think the 'Ayes' have it," he said.

"I think the 'Noes' have it, sir," replied the Whip of the European group.

The Chamber then cleared for a division. Some-

what to my surprise, I noticed half a dozen Indians going into the 'No' lobby, despite the shouts and jeers of the Swarajist majority. Among them was a dapper little man with a glossy black head and a black moustache, whose face attracted me; it was a face I was to know well afterwards! Eager to learn his name, I inquired it from an excitable Swarajist onlooker at my elbow.

He scowled at me, and was at first inclined to ignore my question, but after a pause he replied—

"That is Sir Apurbo Moitra, our leading merchant, and a traitor to his country!"

"Thanks very much," I replied, feeling that Sir Apurbo Moitra deserved encouragement. After an interval of ten minutes the House refilled, and the Whips advanced to the President's dais in true Parliamentary form. When the Swarajist handed the figures to the President there was a wild outburst of cheering, which was renewed even more wildly when the figures were announced:—

For the Resolution . .	85
Against	23
Majority .	62

The cheers inside the House were taken up by the crowds which thronged the vestibule and filled the streets outside. Inside and outside, the majority absolutely let themselves go, dancing and throwing up their sticks and umbrellas with delight.

By dint of much bell-ringing the President restored order after several minutes; Mr Beverley then moved the adjournment of the Chamber. Glad to have listened to a debate which I felt would be historic, but resenting the one-sidedness of it, I made my way into the lobby with a view to getting back to headquarters.

IV.

This, however, was to prove by no means so simple a proposition as I had imagined. During the debate I had found myself at frequent intervals the object of unfriendly glances both from legislators and from lookers-on ; and I had felt increasingly conspicuous in my khaki uniform. When the House rose, an excited mob of onlookers poured into the vestibule and mingled with the equally excited crowd which was waiting to cheer the ' conquering heroes ' of the Chamber. The Bengali is a mercurial creature, easily stirred up or depressed, and on this occasion he was fairly above himself. Many of the onlookers, as I have indicated, were students wrought up to the highest pitch of patriotic exaltation by the ' blow ' which had just been inflicted on the British element. Consequently they were absolutely in the mood for baiting a solitary Britisher in khaki.

As I passed down the stairs, I heard loud voices round me making remarks, the reverse of complimentary, on my uniform and myself. " One of Hardy's spies ! " exclaimed a lank-haired youth in spectacles. I pricked up my ears at this, for it showed that Hardy was already a marked man among them.

" Down with British tyranny ! " yelled another. The cry was taken up by the mob waiting in the entrance hall below, and as I reached the lowest step, there was a rush at me by at least a dozen of them.

Now one of the things I had had to study at close quarters was the psychology of excitable sportsmen —the English Rugby team was mobbed at Paris in 1954, and I had to tackle the Frenchmen. I found then that the best method of stopping a rush is to stand perfectly still, neither advancing nor retreating, to remain perfectly silent, and to look into space.

I had thus come through the Paris ordeal unscathed, and I resorted to the same tactics in Bengal.

It answered, but the strain was severe. The students surged around me, abusing me, my countrymen and my uniform in filthy English, of which they seemed to have an extensive vocabulary; the crowd grew thicker and thicker. I longed to look round for another white face, but refrained from doing so, and kept looking resolutely before me.

Suddenly an English voice—a woman's—pierced through the din.

"Oh, what are they doing to that poor soldier? Captain Armstrong, do help him!"

And into the partial silence dropped another woman's voice—this time a noble contralto,—which said—

"Indians, I am ashamed of you!"

I glanced round. Behind me on the stairs—which were now a good deal less crowded—were the two ladies I had noticed in the President's gallery. Lady Bowles, of course, was the first speaker. My superb Princess was the second. Lady Bowles looked concerned—almost frightened. Not so the Princess. With her right hand on the balustrade and her left holding aside her sari, she looked at the crowd with eyes that flashed fire. Her fine nostrils were distended, her lips were slightly parted, and there was a spot of red on either cheek. I thought I had never seen a woman looking more imperious or more beautiful. The Baboos fairly wilted before her glance. I turned sideways to the mob and saluted, and at the same time the A.D.C. came to my side.

"Room, please, gentlemen, for Lady Bowles and the Princess," he said pleasantly, and then whispered to me, "Fall in beside me as the ladies pass."

By this time several policemen appeared and began to push back the crowd. The students obeyed,

cheering, because the Governor was highly popular with them, and they hoped that he was about to humiliate the British volunteers. I therefore slipped out in the ladies' train; and as they stepped into their car, I once more saluted and walked rapidly away. I should have loved to thank them in words, but felt that it wasn't a time for speech-making. I hope and expect they understood.

V.

I made my way to headquarters, as I was bent on reporting to Colonel Hardy the incident of which I had been the unwilling occasion. I knew him well enough to be sure he would tell me off severely for my folly; but I hoped I might have some information which might be useful. Anyhow, he had to know the kind of Juggins I was.

I presented myself at the door of his room, and asked the orderly if I could be admitted.

"The Colonel is engaged," replied the orderly, so I hung about for what seemed to be an age, but was probably not more than a quarter of an hour.

At the end of that time, I was surprised to see Mr Douglas come out. He, of course, had come in his car, and had not been mobbed. The orderly knocked at the door, then entered, closed it, and after a pause reappeared.

"You can go in now," he said.

Just as I entered the room the telephone bell rang. Colonel Hardy immediately took up the receiver and became oblivious of my presence.

"Colonel Hardy speaking. Oh, Private Secretary. Yes. . . . Will you kindly repeat it? At eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. Yes, certainly. Good afternoon."

He hung up the receiver, and sat for a moment

looking before him with grave, set face. Then he suddenly became aware of me.

"Oh, good afternoon, Montgomery," he said. "So you have already made your mark in Bengal politics."

So Douglas must have talked! I stammered out my regrets, but he cut me short by saying, "Tell me what happened."

I told him, giving him incidentally as full a report of the debate as I could. He listened attentively without comment, and then I waited for what was coming to me.

"Of course you made a fool of yourself—or you might have made a fool of yourself—by going to a place like that at a time like this," he said. "I confess it never occurred to me to put the legislature out of bounds for the Roughriders. And now it is too late."

"Why too late, sir?" I asked.

"Because there are not likely to be any more debates in that Chamber for a very long time," he replied grimly. "Well, Montgomery, it was perhaps an unfortunate incident, and perhaps it wasn't. But I have heard about it from a third party, and I am delighted that you kept your head under specially trying circumstances. The average Rugger player would have laid out the first half-dozen of them and then got smothered. There would have been a riot, and the Government and the Baboos would have got their blow in first. Your coolness has saved us from that, and incidentally the attack on you has given us a splendid opening for any measures we may think necessary.

"By the way, I want a private secretary and orderly combined—a personal assistant, as they say in the Secretariat. I think you are just the man to suit me—an old head on young shoulders. Your phlegm would be an admirable check upon my

rashness "—he smiled at me. "That is, if anything could check my rashness. What do you say to it, Montgomery?"

"Your personal assistant, sir?"

"It would mean shadowing me the whole day and a good part of the night. You would have no off-time whatever. Next to no rest or sleep. And your busy season would commence right now, for I shall be working all night, and all day to-morrow, unless my plans go wrong."

"I'm ready to start now, sir," I replied. "And thank you for the honour you have done me."

"Very good. Now begin by telephoning from here to Colonel Wilson of the Volunteer Guards, and Major Brand of the Cossipore Artillery. Tell them there will be no meeting this evening. That will bring them here as quickly as their cars can travel —a little dodge to circumvent any listeners in. Ah, Crichton, I was expecting you."

Preceded by a smart tap on the door, a tall handsome man rushed in. He was built on trim soldierly lines, with curly brown hair turning grey at the temples, and bright hazel eyes. I recognised him at once as the Commandant of the Caledonians—Calcutta's kilted regiment. A man of forty, he was, or rather had been, a merchant like most of us, but was now a whole-time soldier, and he clearly approved of the change. He was the other Scottish type—I mean he wasn't dour. He was gay and high-spirited, with just the touch of canniness which makes the perfect soldier.

He strode in with a cheery greeting, and then checked himself and looked at me.

"Montgomery, my confidential orderly," explained Hardy. "Ring up these men, Montgomery. Don't let our conversation interrupt you."

I accordingly proceeded to call up the officers he had mentioned, but it was impossible not to hear

the next few words that passed between the two men in the room.

"You've heard, I suppose?" asked Crichton.

"You mean about the resolution of the Baboos?"

"Yes; have you received a summons to Government House to-morrow?"

"I have."

"So have I. This complicates matters a bit, doesn't it? Forces our hand, don't you think? I suppose it means that we should strike to-morrow?"

"It means," John Hardy answered, "that we shall strike to-night."

CHAPTER SIX.

I.

RETURNING with Princess Roshanara to Government House immediately after the rising of the Chamber, Lady Bowles went straight to the Governor's room —it was called the Council room by courtesy, because here were held the meetings of the Executive Council of Bengal. She found, however, that a Council meeting was already being held with locked doors, and when the Private Secretary, a young Bengali Civilian, came out in response to her peremptory knock, he informed her, with many apologies, that she could not see her husband at the moment.

"A Council meeting of special importance is being held," he told her, "and His Excellency has sent me out to say that he can see nobody till it is over."

Lady Bowles returned to her own room oppressed by a feeling of impending catastrophe. She was sensitive to atmosphere, a woman of keen intuitions, who knew India infinitely better than her husband, and what she had seen and heard that afternoon had left her with the conviction that the policy which he had been pursuing—and to which she had been strongly opposed—was about to ultimate in disaster.

She was a tall, thin, highly strung woman, in late middle life, who had herself been born in India, where her family had served for generations. She offered, in every way, as complete a contrast as possible to her husband, who was short, plethoric, and plebeian, the son of one who had made a fortune out of a mammoth store—a fortune which Sir James Bowles had gone far to dissipate through

sheer ineptitude. The two had little in common save two grown up children, who were both in England.

The Council meeting lasted for an hour, and when it was over, the Governor remained in consultation with his Private Secretary. The colloquy was interrupted by the appearance of Lady Bowles, and as it was evident to both men that she was determined to speak to her husband, Mr Banerji, the Secretary, after placing a chair for Her Excellency, withdrew.

Sir James Bowles, pompous but uneasy (as he always was when his wife wore her present expression), opened the conversation.

" I'm very sorry, my dear, that the door was closed when you came," he said, " but we were in the middle of a very important Council—about the most important, I think, since I took office,—and it was impossible to interrupt it."

" My interruption was more important than the meeting," was Lady Bowles' quiet reply. " I suppose you were discussing to-day's resolution in the Chamber ? "

" You are quite right, my dear, we were. You were present at the debate I know. What did you think of it ? "

" It doesn't matter what I think. What are you going to do about it ? " replied Her Excellency.

" We have decided," the Governor replied in his most formal voice, " that the resolution gives us sufficient justification for putting a stop to this military nonsense which has turned Calcutta into an armed camp, and is sowing the seeds of the most dangerous discontent amongst the Indian inhabitants."

" How are you going to put a stop to it ? "

" Well, in the first place, I have summoned the five commandants to see me—in Council, of course

—to-morrow morning. I shall talk things over in a friendly way, pointing out the provocative aspect of their movement, and requesting them, as a personal favour, to go back to the ordinary drilling once a week. That will be the thin end of the wedge. Once they have agreed to that, we can bring further pressure to bear on them until the martial fit dies down, and they go back quietly to their shops and offices."

"But suppose they don't agree to your suggestions?"

The Governor drew a deep breath and puffed out his chest. "In that case, my dear, I shall proclaim their drillings unlawful assemblies, and have them dispersed by the police."

"By the police!" exclaimed Lady Bowles in amazement.

"Reinforced by the military, if necessary."

"What military, James?"

"Well, we have a battalion of European regulars between here and Barrackpore, and three native regiments—that surely ought to be sufficient, even if they do not give in when their meetings are proclaimed."

"Do you really suppose," asked Lady Bowles with a weary smile, "that the European regulars are going to fire upon their own countrymen?"

"Do you then mean to suggest that loyal British troops will mutiny? The idea is preposterous."

"Can you not see that it is you and your Government that are preposterous," replied Lady Bowles sadly. "Is it possible that even you can imagine that you can trample on British people, and that they will stand it for ever? Can't you see what things are coming to? Will you not listen to me, James? I know India and you do not. I do wish I had spoken more plainly before, but I feel I must put the whole situation clearly before you now, as I see it."

The Governor sat silent, taken aback by her obvious earnestness.

" Just look at Calcutta now, and compare it with what it was even when we came," continued his wife. " I won't say anything about the time when I was here as a child, because the change is beyond all words, but two years ago trade was moderately good. The English community had, more or less, accepted the constitution settled by the Stephen Commission, and although their position and privileges had been reduced almost to nothing, they were making the best of a bad job. But look at how they are being treated now. They are being hounded out of the services, their trade has been ruined, assaults on them take place almost every day, and even murder is no uncommon thing, and no Indian judge or magistrate will convict. All this has forced them to take the step they have in self-defence, and to-day's resolution will be the last straw."

" And do you suggest that I am responsible for all this, even admitting that it is a true picture ? " asked His Excellency.

" I do not suggest anything, James. I am only stating facts, as you know," was the reply. " You also know, James, that the British people are the most peaceful and law-abiding people in the world. They are infinitely patient because they know that if things are left alone, they generally right themselves. Here in India the British community is specially bound to the Government because of its smallness, and because all white people must hang together. It is all the more serious when patient people cease to be peaceful and go so far as to take up arms. Remember the British have never been aggressive, and in this case they have simply made up their minds to defend themselves, because they have lost all hope that the Government will protect them."

"But what business have they to lose hope—if they have?" asked His Excellency.

His wife looked at him pityingly. "Poor James!" she said. "What a fool's paradise you have been living in! You are surrounded by a lot of Bengali sycophants, who tell you that you are a wonderful man, and I daresay have promised you a statue. I know them, James, and I can tell you that the statue will never be put up in your lifetime. They promised the same to Lord Ripon—and it took them thirty years to collect the money! Meanwhile, you have helped them to all the best posts in the Government, and filled the Bench with their creatures. The result is they are convinced that the British Raj is coming to an end. And if it does, you will find they will treat you very differently."

"But," said the Governor, "there are others round me besides Bengalis—Beverley, for example, and he has cordially acquiesced in everything I have done."

"Yes—but he has sent his wife and daughters home to England."

Sir James bit his lip—and then lost his temper.

"It is a pity, I daresay," he said, "that I was sent out as Governor of Bengal, as it is quite clear you consider me incompetent. But the fact remains that I have been sent out as Governor, and I intend to govern. I am going to see these men to-morrow, and I am going to make them stop this foolery—either by suasion or by force."

Lady Bowles sighed. "You will not force or persuade them to lay down their arms," she replied. "James, I feel as I have never done before, that you are riding for a dreadful fall. Do be advised. Don't send for these officers—cancel your summons to them. If you threaten them in any way, you will only precipitate trouble and drive them to extremes. I saw a young trooper of Colonel

Hardy's mobbed outside the Chamber this evening in the most outrageous manner. If he hadn't kept his head, I don't know what would have happened. Do you imagine his comrades will take a thing like that lying down? Do you think it will make his Colonel more amenable when you see him to-morrow?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," answered the Governor. "I am going to put my foot down upon this insolent attempt to overawe the Government and the people. And if Hardy & Co. make any show of resistance, I shall take all the measures I consider necessary to suppress them."

His wife thought, as she looked at him in silence, that she had never seen him more pompous in his manner and speech. He rang his bell. "You don't mind my going on with Banerji, do you?" asked His Excellency, as the Private Secretary entered. "I still have a good deal to do before beginning to dress."

Lady Bowles hesitated, and then thinking better of it, withdrew.

II.

The dinner-party of fifty which assembled three-quarters of an hour later in the great ante-room of Government House was an animated affair, which was hardly to be wondered at, for most of the guests were Bengalis. The British community had largely ceased to call upon the Governor. They liked his wife, but had come to regard Sir James Bowles himself as their enemy. A few Europeans clung to Government House for the sake of its social traditions, but they were completely out of touch with their fellow-countrymen. The Governor, therefore, even if he had not been enamoured of his Bengali admirers —and he was,—would have been constrained by the European boycott to resort largely to their society.

The dinner that night had been arranged in anticipation of the afternoon's debate in the Chamber, to afford an opportunity for the official and Swarajist elements to forgather, in order to discuss the resolution privately, and, if necessary, hearten the Government to take any further steps which might be imperative.

The Swarajist leader, Koilash Ghose, was there as a matter of course with his pretty and gifted wife, as well as several other lesser lights in the Legislature. Biswas, the Advocate-General, and three Bengali Judges of the High Court, represented the legal element. The three members of the Executive Council were also present, Beverley being the only Englishman amongst them, and A. T. Mookerjee, the Chief Secretary to Government, was also of their number. These, with three British officials and their wives, several of the leading Indian merchants, and a few wealthy Bengali gentlemen and their wives, made up the company who were awaiting Their Excellencies in the great ante-room, standing in a kind of semicircle.

The gay dresses of the Bengali ladies, who wore their becoming national costume, contrasted effectively with the official uniforms and sombre black worn by the men. The scene was an animated one, as the ladies were even keener politicians than the men, and the conversation did not flag. There are few more attractive personalities than the enlightened Bengali lady, although very often the charming manner conceals a bitter anti-English sentiment.

At a quarter-past eight Sir James and Lady Bowles, preceded by the Military Secretary, Major Simpson, entered the room. They moved slowly round the semicircle, shaking hands with each guest as he or she was presented to them. When shaking hands with Koilash Ghose, His Excellency stopped for a moment.

"Congratulations on your speech, and on the passing of the resolution," he said. "We must talk about things later in the evening."

Koilash Ghose bowed low and shot a triumphant glance at his wife. Everybody marked the incident, and took it as an omen that the Government had made up its mind to bring the British to their senses.

At the end of the circle stood the Maharajah and Maharani of Serampore—he a large zemindar who took no interest in politics, and was probably the only man in the company who thought the resolution a mistake. The Governor now offered his arm to Princess Roshanara as the lady of the highest rank, the Maharajah of Serampore bowed and prepared to escort Lady Bowles, the heavy curtains separating the ante-room from the dining-hall were drawn back, and the guests proceeded in order to take their seats at the long table, which filled it from end to end.

The Governor and his wife sat opposite each other at the centre of the table, and the guests radiated from them to either end of the hall in order of precedence. The heavy curtains were once more drawn, and, to the strains of the Governor's band stationed at a discreet distance, the banquet commenced.

It was, as has been said, an animated function. The Governor, it is true, was conscious of a certain uneasiness, which always worried him when he had had a sharp difference with his wife. Nor was this feeling lessened as he glanced across the table at her from time to time and marked her troubled expression. Roshanara, too, was oppressed by a feeling of unreality about the scene, and by a premonition of crisis or catastrophe.

These feelings, however, were apparently shared by none of the guests. The Bengali ladies especially were in high spirits, feeling that the 'battle of free-

dom ' was almost won, and that only a little firmness on the part of the Government towards the British community was necessary to complete the victory.

" What did you think of my husband's speech ? " asked pretty Mrs Koilash Ghose of her left-hand neighbour, the Hon. Mr Beverley, towards the end of the repast.

Mr Beverley, as has been shown, was extremely dissatisfied with the position he had been compelled to take up. His only refuge lay in a general cynicism, and this Mrs Ghose was now to discover.

" An able speech, Mrs Ghose," he replied, " but a very dangerous one—dangerous, I mean, to your husband himself."

" Dangerous to him ! " she exclaimed, so startled that she nearly dropped her spoon in the act of conveying an ice to her mouth. " How can you make that out ? His Excellency himself expressed entire approval of it just before dinner."

" His Excellency, of course, was thinking of its quality as a contribution to the debate rather than of its personal reactions upon Koilash Ghose."

" But what personal reactions are there likely to be ? "

" Well, you know, it gave—it must have given—deadly offence to the British side."

" And what does that matter now ? Who cares whether they are offended or not ? "

" My dear lady, we may all be forced to care very much if they take it too much to heart."

" But why should you suppose they are going to take it to heart at all ? They have been humbled to the dust, and have said nothing up to date."

" Yes, but that is just the trouble. You see, the British are so different from you charming Bengalis. If your people had had to put up with what the British have had to suffer during the past few years, the whole world would have known about it. You

would have held public meetings, you would have turned on all your newspapers, and you would have raised Cain in the Chamber and in Parliament. But the British are a silent people. Consequently, you can never tell when they have had enough. Have you ever seen a bull-dog tackle ? "

" You mean, attack a man ? No, I haven't."

" It is an unforgettable sight," mused the senior Executive member. " There is no noise or fuss. He doesn't bark or give you the slightest warning. He just grips you, and then nothing on earth will induce him to let go."

" You mean to imply that the British in Calcutta are bull-dogs ? " asked Mrs Ghose quizzically.

" I shall be in a better position to answer that question twenty-four hours hence," said Mr Beverley. " Meanwhile don't bank too much upon their silence. For my own part, I don't like it. And if they ever do break out, your husband is a marked man."

" But surely they won't go against their own Government ? " the lady faltered.

" I can think of a great many things that are far more improbable. Of this I am sure, that they have now been baited up to the extreme limit of human endurance. If they don't break out to-morrow they never will. To-night is the Ides of March."

The colloquy broke off at this point for a reason which interrupted the conversation of every other couple in the room. The Governor's band had been discoursing sweet music throughout the dinner. It was ensconced on a balcony on the other side of the ante-room from the diners, so that distance lent enchantment to its strains ; and at this point—the removal of the dessert—it had been murmuring, rather than playing, the century old Barcarolle from *Hoffmann*—a dreamy composition admirably

tempered to the grateful repletion which follows upon a perfect dinner.

Suddenly, with a blast of trumpets, which made everybody jump, it had passed from *piano, piano ma non troppo* to an overpowering *fortissimo*. Louder and louder it grew, until many of the guests put their fingers to their ears, and everybody stared at each other.

" Simpson ! " called the Governor, " go instantly to the bandmaster and tell him to stop that hideous din. Good heavens ! Is the man mad ? "

The Military Secretary understood his signs rather than his speech, for the noise had reached the pitch of drowning all other sounds.

Major Simpson moved towards the curtain, and two boyish A.D.C.s at the end of the table grinned as they saw him approaching and, guessing his errand, jumped up and drew aside the curtain. They fell back, almost on the Military Secretary, as they did so, for stretched across the opening giving upon the ante-room there stood a line of khaki-clad Roughriders with fixed bayonets at the ' slope.'

As the company stared, stupefied at the apparition, the tall form of John Hardy, helmeted and fully accoutred, advanced and stood in front of his men. Drawing himself up to his full height, he brought his drawn sword to the salute.

III.

The music ceased suddenly, and before those present could collect their faculties, Hardy began to speak.

" Your Excellencies," he said, " I beg ten thousand pardons for interrupting your hospitalities, and especially for the lapse of the band. May I explain, in justice to them, that I gave them the order to

play loudly to enable us to take up our position without disturbing you or your guests."

After a brief pause, during which his eyes raked the table and those who sat at it, he went on in sterner tones—

"I will ask you all to listen to me attentively and not to move in your seats until I give permission. We are here to discuss a business matter with the Governor and his Council, all of whom I am very pleased to see present. Nobody at this table has anything to fear from us, but until we have finished our business, no one can be permitted to leave Government House. All the men present must please consider themselves under arrest. As for the ladies, I will ask them to withdraw from the dining saloon and proceed to the small drawing-room under escort, where they can enjoy their coffee in perfect safety. Will Her Excellency"—here he saluted—"be good enough to lead the way?"

Lady Bowles, who, like the rest, had listened in stunned surprise, rose almost automatically, and this seemed to break the spell which had been cast over the whole company. The Governor now asserted himself for the first and last time that evening.

"Her Excellency," he exclaimed in a throaty voice, "will do nothing without my permission. May I ask, sir, who or what is your authority for this outrageous proceeding?"

"We will show you our credentials presently," Hardy answered. "Meanwhile, I will ask Your Excellency to be silent. We are in no mood to bandy words."

Turning to his men as he spoke, he called them to the 'order,' and the gleam of bayonets and the rattle of rifle-butts on the marble floor gave a stern emphasis to his command of the situation.

"Resistance is quite useless," he continued. "The Roughriders are in possession of Govern-

ment House, and it is surrounded by more than 3000 auxiliaries. I will again request Her Excellency to lead the ladies to the drawing-room."

Lady Bowles, who had remained standing during this passage, now led the way after a glance at her husband of which he alone knew the significance. The Roughrider party stood to attention as they passed out; and then the men, who were left at the table, noticed with fresh surprise that the troops were accompanied by several well-known British business men, and at least one prominent lawyer in evening dress.

Hardy saluted the ladies as they retired. He saluted Roshanara specially, and their eyes met as she passed him. When the ladies had all gone, Hardy turned abruptly to the men.

"Our business," he repeated, "is with His Excellency and his Council, and also with the Chief Secretary to the Government. The rest will be good enough to leave the saloon and wait in the great hall downstairs. We mean no harm to any of you, but anyone who attempts resistance or escape will be shot without ceremony. Lieutenant Brocklehurst, lead the prisoners away."

Koilash Ghose started at the ominous word, but his fellow-barrister, Robert Clough, who now advanced into the room, saw the motion, and laid his hand on his arm.

"Keep quiet, Koilash," he said. "You have had a good innings, and it is our turn to do the talking."

Robert Clough was a spare iron-grey man of fifty, with a clean-cut lawyer's face. He had been adviser to the movement from the beginning, and was ready to take his seat in the Provisional Government which was about to be formed. He now took charge of the proceedings.

The long dining-table presented a deserted ap-

pearance. The khitmutgars had all been sent away, and Roughriders guarded the entrance at either end. Huddled in the centre were the Governor, the members of Council, and the Chief Secretary; Hardy, Colonel Crichton, Robert Clough, and two other civilians now came up and stood round, or rather over, the official group.

"Your Excellency," Robert Clough began, "demanded just now from Colonel Hardy by whose authority he acted. I am here to explain that we represent the entire British citizenship of Calcutta, and also a very large number of Indians who agree that drastic steps must be taken to save Calcutta and Bengal from disaster.

"You may or may not be aware of the seriousness of the conspiracy that is on foot to drive the British from India. Judging from the folly of your administration in Bengal, it is charitable to suppose that you are not aware of it. Nevertheless it is known to every non-official that there is a widespread conspiracy throughout Northern India, both civil and military in its character, and that at any moment we may be face to face with revolution. In these circumstances the British citizens of Calcutta have come to the conclusion that the interests of the State are not secure in the hands of your Government, and that a more vigorous administration must be set up in its place.

"Added to these considerations is the intolerable state of things which has grown up throughout Bengal during the past twelve months. Aided and abetted, I am reluctantly compelled to say, by Your Excellency and your Government, the anti-British element has been fostered and encouraged until the life of the average Englishman even in Calcutta has ceased to be worth living. In the Mofussil it has become impossible for the white man to exist. He has been driven from every Mofussil station by violence, by

insults and, in many cases, by outrage and murder. Things are only less intolerable here because we are in force, even although we have not hitherto asserted ourselves. We have exercised a patience which I venture to think has been in the circumstances unequalled. But we have foreseen a time when it should be exhausted; hence our military preparations. The last straw came this afternoon, when the Baboos of the Legislative Chamber demanded our disbandment, and when Your Excellency summoned the five commanding officers in order to enforce that demand upon them. It is obvious that the disbandment of the Europeans could lead to only one result. It would leave every Britisher defenceless and at the mercy of the seditious and hostile element which is even at this moment plotting the overthrow of British rule.

"The murders, the outrages, that are being inflicted on Europeans as a body, the infamous insults that are daily offered to our few remaining women—these are a few of the causes that have literally driven us to take up arms against the Government as by law established. As a lawyer, no one is more keenly sensible than I of the seriousness of the step we have taken. But we have fully weighed all the consequences of our action, and are not to be turned back."

He paused and looked at Hardy.

"I think that is all that has to be said?" he inquired.

Hardy nodded, and stepped closer to the Governor.

"A Provisional Government has been formed," he said, "and I invite Your Excellency to give your formal sanction to a notification which will appear to-morrow in a 'Calcutta Gazette' Extraordinary."

He laid a paper before Sir James Bowles, and stood over him as he stared at it. The Governor

adjusted his glasses with hands that shook. As he read his face grew pale, and then reddened with fury on taking in the full purport of the document.

"What the devil does this mean?" he spluttered. "'The Governor in Council is pleased to appoint a Provisional Government'? This is preposterous, outrageous. I refuse to sign such a document. I and my colleagues are required to——"

Robert Clough interrupted him.

"I am afraid, Your Excellency, we have no time to waste in talk. Briefly, if you sign the notification you will be permitted to remain titular Governor of Bengal. You will exercise no power whatever—that remains with us. But at least you will be spared the humiliation of being deported."

"Deported!" His Excellency exclaimed, turning pale once more.

"Yes; unless you consent to sign the notification immediately, you will be placed on board the B.I. vessel *Mewara*, which sails for England to-morrow morning. Lady Bowles will, of course, accompany you. These are our alternatives. We must ask you to be good enough to choose between them without further delay."

The Governor looked up in bewilderment, but saw no relenting in the stern faces bent on him. From them he glanced at either end of the hall, which was strongly guarded by Roughriders with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets. Then he looked despairingly around him, and his eyes fell on the supercilious countenance of the Hon. Mr Beverley. There was no change in the cynical coolness of the senior member of the Executive, who now spoke as if in reply to His Excellency's mute appeal.

"I don't see, Sir, that you can do anything else but sign. These men obviously mean business, and are in a position to carry out their threat. Nothing

that you or I can do or say will prevent them; and that being the case, the question is whether it will be better for you to yield to force and remain at your post, or defy them and be hustled ignominiously out of the country. I can't imagine anything less conducive to one's future peace of mind than the recollection of going home from India in a B.I. boat. The P. & O. or the air route wouldn't have looked quite so bad."

"There is a great deal in what Mr Beverley says," struck in Robert Clough. "It seems to me—and, I may add, to my colleagues—that Your Excellency stands to score by accepting our terms. For if we win—and our sole object is to maintain the British Empire in Bengal—you will be able to claim the negative virtue of having done nothing to hamper our patriotic efforts. If we lose outright—that is, if the Empire is overthrown—we shall all probably lose our lives, not excepting Your Excellency. If we lose only in the sense that we fail to hold Bengal and are found guilty of high treason by our own Government, you will have any number of witnesses to swear that you were constrained to what you did. I don't see how you can possibly lose by agreeing to these proposals."

After another pause, during which the Governor alternately bit his lips and looked at the ceiling for inspiration, he suddenly caught at the fountain pen which was ready in Hardy's hand and signed the notification. Then he flung both pen and paper away from him, and glared upwards at Hardy and Crichton.

"I have yielded to force," he said, "but I wash my hands of all responsibility for what may happen now or afterwards. And God help you and your friends, Hardy, if——"

Crichton, the impetuous, laid his hand on his sword, very much as his Border ancestors might have

done ; but Hardy, with greater deftness, turned the malediction after his own fashion.

" God has helped us up to now," he interrupted, " and we do not doubt that He will continue to help us if we deserve it. But it is good of Your Excellency to bless us. I say in my turn—God help Your Excellency, and God save the King ! "

The two commanders saluted, and the Governor and Beverley half rose in their seats. The Indian members of Council rose also, but missed the psychological moment by half a beat.

" And now, Mr Beverley, we require your signature," proceeded Clough.

" With pleasure," said that official calmly, as he took up the paper and glanced at its contents. His eyes twinkled.

" John Hardy, Lieutenant-Colonel ; William Crichton, Lieutenant-Colonel ; and Apurbo Moitra, Kt.," he commented, running his eye over the names of the five men constituting the Provisional Government. " So Apurbo Moitra is in with you, is he ? "

" He is not at this moment aware of his promotion to a seat in the Government," Clough replied, " but he will be here within the hour, and I have not the least doubt that he will throw in his lot with us. As I have already told His Excellency, there are many thousands of law-abiding Indians who are just as tired of present conditions as we are, and are convinced that a continuance of British rule is essential to India's prosperity."

" Robert Clough, barrister-at-law," read on Beverley, with the faint sneer which seemed inseparable from his outlook on life. " So you are being rewarded for your share in to-night's work ? "

" I don't know that there is much reward about it," Clough retorted. " Anyone can have my post in the Provisional Government if a better man can be found. Unfortunately, there are not many candi-

dates for the job of clearing up the mess which you and your colleagues have made of Bengal. Now, will you be good enough to sign—if you have quite finished commenting on the Notification."

Beverley shrugged his shoulders, and after one more perusal of the document, complied.

"You have taken on a big thing, gentlemen," was his Parthian shot. "I hope your ability may prove equal to your self-confidence."

"That will do," said Hardy, pointing to the Notification. "You have ceased to count in Bengal."

The Notification was now passed rapidly to the two remaining members of the Government, and to the Chief Secretary.

Rajah Ram Narayan Law, the second member of Council, wrote his name in silence; but the third member, Mr Romesh Chunder Bose, showed unexpected fight.

"I will not sign this treasonable document," he announced, adjusting his pince-nez and glaring fiercely around upon the whole group. "You may do what you like to me, but you will not force me to sign it."

He was a thick-set solid little man of fifty, wearing a moustache and Imperial. Clough looked grave for a moment, but Hardy smiled.

"Very well, Romesh Baboo," he said. "Far be it from us to force an honest man to sign any document that is against his convictions. We can do without your signature. Those of your colleagues, including His Excellency himself, and the honoured name of our friend A. T. Mookerjee, Chief Secretary, will suffice for our purpose. I am afraid, however, we must place all three members of the Executive under arrest. Prentice, you will take care of these three gentlemen until we can remove them to the Fort. Will you also cause a guard to be mounted over Their Excellencies' apartments."

He turned to the Governor.

"I think, Sir, it would now be well if Your Excellency retired. Lady Bowles will join you very shortly."

The last that was seen of the Government of Bengal (old style) was the Governor going one way, and the members of his Executive Council making their exit by another door, all under guard.

"And now let us get to business, gentlemen, for we have a long night before us," said Hardy to his colleagues. "Montgomery, lead the way to the Governor's bureau, which we shall occupy *pro tem.* Then go and release Her Excellency from the drawing-room, and escort her to her husband. Tell the other ladies that they must make up their minds to a long wait in the drawing-room, and so must their husbands downstairs; for we can permit no one to leave Government House until we have issued our notifications, telegraphed them to the district authorities all over Bengal, appointed a Military Governor of Calcutta, and proclaimed martial law."

CHAPTER SEVEN.

I.

'Calcutta Gazette' Extraordinary.

"A state of emergency having arisen which renders it desirable that a Provisional Government should be appointed, the Governor of Bengal in Council is pleased to appoint the following as a Provisional Government with unlimited powers :—

"John Hardy, Lieutenant-Colonel, commanding the Roughrider Corps.

"William Crichton, Lieutenant-Colonel, commanding the Caledonian Regiment.

"Sir Apurbo Moitra, Kt.

"Ahmed Ali, Nawab Bahadur.

"Robert Clough, Esquire, Barrister-at-law.

"All persons in civil or military employ are hereby required to carry out all orders issued by the Provisional Government as above constituted, for which this Notification shall be their warrant. The citizens of Bengal are likewise enjoined to obey all orders and notifications issued by the Provisional Government on peril of their lives.

"By Order of the Governor of Bengal in Council,

"A. T. MOOKERJEE,
"Chief Secretary to Government.

"*Dated* CALCUTTA, *the 5th November* 1957."

Proclamation of Martial Law.

"I, John Hardy, President of the Provisional Government of Bengal, by order of the said Pro-

visional Government, do hereby proclaim the existence of a state of martial law throughout the city and suburbs of Calcutta. Major-General J. C. Stewart, commanding the Presidency and Assam, is hereby appointed Military Governor of Calcutta, with powers of life and death. All citizens of Calcutta are required, on peril of their lives, to yield implicit obedience to orders issued under this Notification by the Military Governor. It is not intended to curtail their movements or liberties any more than is judged to be necessary for the preservation of order.

" JOHN HARDY,
" President, Provisional Government.

" *Dated* CALCUTTA, *the 5th November* 1957."

The above Notifications were sent off to the official printers almost before Colonels Hardy and Crichton and Robert Clough had taken their seats in the Governor's bureau. As soon as they had seated themselves, Hardy began to shoot out laconic orders. Assured of the support of his colleagues, he did not pause to refer to them ; time was too precious. His staff, accustomed to his methods, obeyed with an efficient and joyous alacrity. He distributed his orders to various officers and orderlies by name ; the substance of them was as follows :—

" Get all the Commissioners of Divisions on the long distance telephone. Communicate to them the effect of the ' Gazette ' Extraordinary, order them to pass it on to all magistrates and judges, and acknowledge receipt.

" Montgomery, telephone to Sir Apurbo Moitra, to General Stewart, and to Sir Everard Bates, Commissioner of Police. Say to each of them that their

presence is required at Government House immediately. See that the guard admits them, and bring them here as soon as they arrive.

"Major Bellingham, withdraw the Roughriders to headquarters, leaving 100 of the cavalry section here as an emergency force. Tell the other commandants to withdraw their troops from Government House, but all must stand to arms at their headquarters, ready for action at a moment's notice. The flying section will reconnoitre over the jute mills at intervals, beginning at daybreak to-morrow.

"Captain Robertson, hand this notice as to the establishment of the Provisional Government to the editors of the six daily papers. Order them to publish it prominently and without comment, and to publish no other reference to the matter at any time without permission of the Military Governor. Tell them that the slightest infraction of these orders will lead to the suppression of the paper, and possibly to the execution of the editors and printers.

"Captain Wilson, here is a list of persons to be arrested, together with their addresses. Seize them and convey them to the Fort, where they will remain pending the issue of further orders by the Military Governor. Should there be any attempt at rescue or escape, you will cut them down. (The list contained the names of five Bengali politicians, two Punjabis, and one newspaper editor.) Send a machine-gun detachment to the University, and disperse any assemblies of students that may attempt to congregate to-morrow. Post up the 'Gazette' Extraordinary at the University, the Law Courts, the Bar Library, the Stock Exchange, the clubs, and every other place where people are likely to meet for business or pleasure."

While Hardy issued these orders by word of mouth, Robert Clough wrote busily, and Colonel Crichton, the remaining member of the Provisional

Government, smoked and nodded approval of Hardy's instructions. When the flow of orders slackened for a moment, he leaned forward and said—

"What about the two University Corps and the National Volunteers?"

"We can make no arrangements regarding them until we have seen the General and the Commissioner of Police," Hardy replied. "I want to find out from Bates if he has discovered the *cache* of arms which exists somewhere near Calcutta, for if the National Volunteers have succeeded in arming themselves to any extent, we shall have to turn on a bigger force to deal with them. It will be for General Stewart to parade the University Corps and disarm them if he thinks fit."

"Why do you qualify the order?" asked Crichton. "Can there be any doubt about the necessity of disarming them?"

"I think there is," Hardy replied. "You will find that a great many Bengalis will side with us, and you will also find a good many of their sons in the University Corps. Besides, the University Corps hate the National Volunteers and despise them as heartily as the old-fashioned cavalryman used to look down on the foot slogger."

Montgomery knocked at the door and entered.

"Sir Apurbo Moitra is here, sir," he announced.

"Show him in at once," said the President.

II.

Sir Apurbo Moitra came into the room with a brisk step and alert manner, and started as he noticed the men who occupied it. He was a man nearer sixty than fifty, but looked—as indeed he was—in the prime of life. He had a well-shaped head, thickly covered with black and glossy hair,

a small black moustache neatly trimmed, eyes whose piercing character was emphasised by the gold spectacles he wore, and a square jaw. He was slightly below the middle height, and was in European dress. His accent was somewhat clipped, indicating a youth passed entirely in India—he had never travelled until well on in middle life,—but his English was clear, vigorous, and generally idiomatic. Although a Bengali, he was senior partner in one of the principal European firms in Calcutta.

He paused when just over the threshold.

"Hullo, Hardy!" he exclaimed. "There must have been some mistake. I was rung up fifteen minutes ago and told the Governor wanted to see me."

Hardy rose and shook him by the hand, as did the other members of the Government.

"There is no mistake, Sir Apurbo," he said. "The Governor has delegated his powers to us four and yourself; we have ventured to send for you to notify you of your appointment as a member of the Provisional Government."

The new-comer took in the situation in a flash, and his white teeth showed in a smile of genuine enjoyment.

"Oh!" he commented, "so you have done it at last, have you? I wondered how much longer you were going to stand it. So you have His Excellency under lock and key, have you? I'll swear he never thought of a Provisional Government himself."

"No," replied Hardy. "It was our idea, but he fell in with it after we had talked to him. And now, Moitra, will you join us?"

"What if I don't?" quizzed the other.

"I am afraid it won't make much difference," Hardy replied. "You see your name has already been affixed to a notification which is being run off as a 'Gazette' Extraordinary."

Sir Apurbo Moitra breathed a sigh of relief. "That settles it," he commented, as he sat down on one of the two vacant chairs. "Not that I would have refused anyhow. These swine require a lesson, and it is worth while risking a hanging in order to give it to them. I am for strong measures, Hardy. Will you let me see the notification which I am supposed to have signed?"

He read through both announcements and nodded approval. "By the way," he said, "martial law means the curfew, doesn't it? Everybody indoors after dark?"

Clough replied in the affirmative.

"That's all very well," pursued Sir Apurbo, "but don't forget the Lakshmi and Kali Poojahs come on in a few days, and that involves processions with images, immersions, and all sorts of things after dark. It won't do for us to interfere with these age-long customs."

"I am glad you mentioned it," answered Hardy. "Yes, of course we must arrange for the poojahs to be celebrated. As a matter of fact, by the time they come on the city ought to have been pacified sufficiently to admit of the lightening or the removal of martial law."

"Yes, on one condition," said Sir Apurbo, "and that is that you strike terror into the hearts of these *budmashes* in the first day or two. Don't hesitate to shoot if there is the slightest opposition. A little blood-letting at the beginning will save much bloodshed later on."

"Bravo, Moitra!" exclaimed Colonel Crichton. "I almost wish you had been nominated Military Governor."

"What you English fail to realise," continued Sir Apurbo, "is what colossal humbugs most of my countrymen are. There is nothing they love like firm government. Even the politicians dote on it

in secret, however they may denounce it in public. Give them a good stiff dose of 'martial law and no damned nonsense,' and I predict that Calcutta will remain absolutely peaceful, and that we shall be the most popular Government that has ever been known. Where is Ahmed Ali?"

"Probably in bed," answered Clough.

"But he has signed the notification just as I have. Why don't you send for him as you sent for me?"

"To-morrow will be ample time to get hold of him," replied the legal member of the Government. "He will come when we want him, and endorse everything that we shall do. We have other and more urgent matters to attend to."

"General Stewart," announced Montgomery, stepping aside to admit the G.O.C. at Fort William in Bengal.

III.

The Provisional Government rose to their feet as the General entered, and Hardy and Crichton saluted. General Stewart stopped short, returned the salute mechanically, and then looked round him in some astonishment.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said. "I expected to find the Governor here."

"You find the Government, General," Hardy replied. "A crisis having arisen, the Governor in Council has retired from active participation in affairs, and has nominated the gentlemen whom you see—and one other—as a Provisional Government. Here is the notification authorising us to function."

General Stewart scanned the notification and smiled under his grizzled moustache. He was about the same age as Sir Apurbo Moitra, but showed it a good deal more. He was short, thick-set, and red-

faced—an entirely good-natured personality, with reserves of strength which few people suspected.

"So that is how the land lies," he commented, laying down the paper on the table. "You have taken a bold step, gentlemen—indeed, a desperate step,—but I don't know that you could have done anything else. And now, why have you sent for me?"

"If you will sit down, General, we can soon explain that," answered Hardy, handing him the second notification as they all seated themselves. The General studied it in silence.

"You are satisfied, gentlemen, that the emergency calls for martial law?" he said. "Personally, I should have preferred to wait for some overt expression of violence."

"If we had waited for that, we might have waited until it was too late," replied Hardy. "Our reasons appear to us to be sufficiently cogent, and they are these. In the first place, a military outbreak, in which all the native corps under your command are implicated, has been fixed to take place a week hence, and it may actually take place several days earlier. In the second place, there is bound to be trouble in Calcutta when it becomes known that we have upset the Government of Sir James Bowles and have formed a Provisional Government. In the third place—and this is by no means the least important consideration,—we want to show the Baboos that we mean business."

"I quite agree with our President," struck in Sir Apurbo Moitra. "The third consideration is the most important of all. We have got to teach the Baboos a lesson."

The General showed signs of emotion. "Are you sure about the military outbreak?" he asked.

"I am perfectly certain about it," answered Hardy. "Time, date, and place are fixed, and I owe

my knowledge to the Sultan of Jehanabad, who actually despatched his sister, the Princess Roshanara, to bring us the news by air. The rising is fixed for the 14th of November, and we are arresting to-night at least half a dozen Calcutta agitators who are mixed up with it."

General Stewart was silent for a few moments. Then he said—

"If that is so, I agree with you as to a state of emergency having arisen."

"And you will act as Military Governor of Calcutta?" This from Hardy.

The General nodded assent.

"I will hand you an *aide memoire* which is being drawn up by Mr Clough," Hardy continued, "and this will contain our considered views as to the measures which are desirable to pacify the city. Meanwhile you may take it as a general instruction that for the first week martial law should be administered with the utmost sternness. I don't believe in a policy of mere terror——"

"I do, Mr President," murmured Sir Apurbo.

"But," continued Hardy, "when orders are issued they must be obeyed; and as the political element has got above itself after the encouragement it has received and the impunity it has enjoyed, it may require one or two sharp lessons before it realises that a Government is once more in being. You are therefore authorised, General, to punish summarily and drastically any attempt to disobey your orders. I should imagine that after the first day or two it will not be necessary."

"I shall disarm the native troops in the Fort to-morrow morning," said General Stewart. "I take it that the University Corps should also have its teeth drawn?"

"That is a matter on which I should like the opinion of Sir Apurbo Moitra," replied Hardy.

" It is a matter of great delicacy. On the one hand, we can't leave a disaffected body of armed students at large. On the other hand, they may not prove to be disaffected. What do you think, Sir Apurbo ? "

" I think," replied the Bengali knight, " that if General Stewart parades them and makes an appeal to their loyalty, most of them will stand firm. Of course, there is a *budmash* element among them, and it will probably break away. But don't forget, gentlemen, that a very large number of citizens, both Hindu and Mohammedan, are whole-heartedly on the side of the British, and that many of these University boys are the sons and nephews of these people. For the disaffected, however, there should be the shortest shrift. Mildness will be completely thrown away upon them."

" Well, gentlemen, you will doubtless leave the matter to me," said the General. " Personally, I prefer to run no risks."

Jim Montgomery appeared at the door.

" Sir Everard Bates has just come, sir," he announced, and the Commissioner of Police followed immediately on his heels—a man of middle height and middle age, a monocle stuck in his right eye, and a face which never seemed to lose a certain quizzical expression. He had a slight clipped moustache.

He exhibited no surprise at the company assembled in the Governor's private room. He had expected the auxiliary forces to take action when the Legislative Council passed its fatal resolution ; one glance round the room showed him that the reins of Government had indeed changed hands.

He addressed himself to General Stewart as the senior military officer, but the General nodded and referred him to Hardy.

" I am the head of the Provisional Government, Sir Everard," explained Hardy. " The Governor

has delegated his powers to five citizens, of whom four are present; and in virtue of the powers conferred upon us we have newly proclaimed martial law, and appointed General Stewart as Military Governor of Calcutta. We have sent for you in order to inform you of the state of emergency which has arisen, and in order that you and the General may be able to act in concert to preserve the peace. I think we are all known to each other."

Sir Everard Bates now took his seat at the table.

"I suppose," said Colonel Crichton, "that you can count on the loyalty of the police?"

"Generally speaking, yes," was the answer. "Being up-countrymen they are cordially detested by the Bengalis, and they are certainly not privy to any mischief that may have been hatched locally. My Bengal inspectors I can vouch for. A finer and a braver set of men does not exist anywhere."

"To-morrow will be the most critical day we shall have to face," said Hardy, "and the business of putting down disorder will depend very largely upon whether the disaffected element is able to distribute arms to its adherents. Have you by any chance been able to locate the *cache* which we know they have established somewhere in the neighbourhood?"

"Unfortunately, I have not," answered the Police Commissioner. "But the chances are against their being able to make use of it. It is not in Calcutta—of that I feel sure,—while if it is anywhere outside, we can prevent the arms from coming in by watching the four main roads which afford entrance into Calcutta, and the river front will also have to be strictly patrolled. The railway authorities, of course, must also be warned to search all passengers at the main stations."

"If you are right," observed Hardy, "our task should be simplified. The chief danger will then be the mill hands on the river. They have been getting

ready to rise for some time, and the trouble on French territory, when the Princess Roshanara's plane was destroyed by the mill hands of the Brindaban mill, is bound to spread to our own people."

Robert Clough now handed a paper to General Stewart. "That," he said, "is the *aide memoire* embodying our views generally on the task before us. Perhaps you and Sir Everard will both examine it at leisure. Your first act, General, will be, I take it, the disarming of the troops in the Fort?"

The General rose. "The troops will parade at daybreak," he replied, "and the disarmament should be effected by seven o'clock. If there is nothing more to be said, gentlemen, I will now get back to the Fort."

"With your permission, gentlemen," added Sir Everard Bates, "I will go with General Stewart, and we can compare notes on the *aide memoire* before I post my police."

The two officers then withdrew, and Crichton yawned and stretched himself.

"Isn't it about time we had replies from the Divisions on the long distance?" he inquired. Then he started violently.

"By Jove, Hardy!" he exclaimed, "it's past midnight. What about those poor women whom you ordered off to the drawing-room a couple of hours ago?"

"I am afraid they will have to stay there for two or three hours more," was the dry response. "We cannot afford to turn them loose to spread the news all over Calcutta before daylight."

CHAPTER EIGHT.

I.

The night of 5th November was a sleepless one for a great many people in Calcutta. Under instructions from the Provisional Government, a censorship was established over posts and telegraphs; the railway administrations were notified to hold themselves in readiness to carry out any orders they might receive in the interests of law and order, and especially to keep at least three trains always ready for the transport of troops; the Treasury was taken over; the Calcutta Corporation was suspended, and municipal affairs were placed in the hands of a single official with autocratic powers, and acting under the Military Governor. The Government press was set to work printing numerous copies of the notification, which were placarded all over the city in English, Bengali, and Urdu. It also appeared in all the six daily papers with one exception, together with a brief paragraph to the effect that Sir James Bowles, while retaining the office of Governor of Bengal, had retired from active participation in affairs, and had in Council appointed a Provisional Government to deal with the present emergency.

There were six daily papers in Calcutta—three English (the 'Briton,' the 'Senator,' and the 'Informer') and three Indian (the 'Ganga Mai,' the 'Mataram,' and the 'Tribeni'). All three except the last-named were published in English, and they duly printed the notification with its official introduction. The 'Tribeni' was a Bengali vernacular; it did not publish the notice; indeed, it had no chance to do so, as it disappeared from the press list that night. But this is to anticipate.

To Captain Robertson of the Roughriders had been entrusted the task of conveying the wishes of the Government to the various newspaper editors. He took a dozen men fully armed with him, and travelled in two speedy cars, but even so he found it difficult to cover half a dozen offices in three or four hours. He left Government House at 11 o'clock, and he knew he must complete his round by four in the morning, because most of the papers went to press at that hour.

He visited the English newspapers first, and received a cordial welcome from their respective editors. They were all taken aback, however, by the news he had to give them, and, headed off from their natural desire to make a 'story' of the *coup d'état*, actually showed some reluctance to publish the official papers.

"Not that I am agin the Government, old chap," said Perkins of the 'Briton'; "but how am I to know that this isn't a leg-pull?"

Robertson drew him to the window and showed him, by the street lamps, the two cars filled with khaki figures carrying loaded rifles.

"Does that look like a leg-pull?" he asked. Perkins grew serious.

"Let me 'phone to Government House for confirmation; do you mind?" he requested.

Robertson nodded impatiently. "Don't forget," he said, "that I have to call at five other offices, and only an hour or two to do it in."

Perkins rang up the Private Secretary's office in Government House, and Jim Montgomery answered the call.

"Who are you?" inquired the editor. "I want the Private Secretary."

"The Private Secretary is under arrest," came the reply. "I am orderly to Colonel Hardy, who is the head of the Provisional Government."

Perkins put back the receiver, and spoke in subdued tones.

"All right, Robertson. I'll put it in. So Hardy has taken action at last?"

"He has," returned the visitor. "Then, if you will promise to insert these three things—and nothing more with reference to the *coup d'état*,—I will cart my party off to the next print shop. Good night."

Robertson had no difficulty with the two other English newspapers, and not much more with the flustered editors of 'Gunga Mai' and the 'Mataram.' Leaving one car load of troopers outside, he raided each office with half a dozen stalwarts armed to the teeth; and the sight of them quickly decided the ink-slingers of Burra Bazaar (both offices were within a stone's-throw of each other) to comply with the requisition.

II.

Robertson then led his party to the office of the 'Tribeni,' which was situated in the purlieus of Cossipore. It was about two o'clock in the morning, and he was specially eager to procure the compliance of this editor, because the vernacular paper has a circulation and an appeal which are in many ways more incalculable than those of the Indian paper published in excellent English. It reaches the thousands who do not know English, and are therefore specially susceptible to propaganda of every kind.

The 'Tribeni,' which had been a highly reputable weekly, had, since its conversion into a daily paper, run a rake's progress of anti-British propaganda, leading finally to blatant and unabashed sedition. It had gradually increased the daily dose of violent incitement which it was its function to administer to its readers; and as the Government had steadily

refused to take any action, it had reached the stage beyond which contempt for British rule and for authority generally could no further go. It had told its readers so often that Great Britain was an exploded force, that it no longer held India by military power, but only by the sufferance of the Indians generally and the Bengalis particularly, that it had come to believe it.

When Robertson with three men burst into the editorial sanctum of the 'Tribeni,' the editor, Hira Lal Bysack, was purring with satisfaction as he read through the final proof of his 'leader' on the brilliant victory which had been achieved in the Legislative Council that afternoon. He had heard no rumour of the interrupted feast at Government House; for his reporters, exhausted with the labour of reporting and translating the speeches at the debate, had gone home without troubling about later developments.

Hira Lal was reading his article aloud for the delectation of his assistant editor, cousin and hanger-on, Ram Mohun. The editor of the 'Tribeni' was a perfect caricature of the typical Bengali politician. He was fat, greasy, and had goggle eyes gazing through thick glasses with a ferocity which was not all assumed. His long immunities had rendered him insolent and overbearing, and for months he had never lost an opportunity of insulting any English person with whom he had come into contact. More than once he had been assaulted, but the law had always befriended him, and his assailants had either gone to prison or been heavily fined. He was, in short, suffering badly from a superiority complex. He was in the inner councils of the anti-British conspiracy; and he went habitually armed.

Hira Lal was just declaiming and repeating for the benefit of Ram Mohun the last sentence of his editorial, which read, or rather which was to have read, "We have got the hated aliens 'on the run.'

It is for our leaders, and especially for our volunteers, to keep them thus," when loud voices were heard outside demanding admittance to the editor. Almost immediately afterwards Captain Robertson, accompanied by three Roughriders, entered the room.

"Are you the editor?" he asked of Hira Lal, who had risen from his seat. The only answer was a scowl. Hira Lal had often hoped and prayed that he would be able to show his contempt for the British in just such circumstances as these.

"Answer me!" Robertson demanded, without raising his voice (a somewhat unusual thing for a Briton addressing an Indian). "I have an order to hand to the editor, whoever he is, from the Provisional Government, which has proclaimed martial law, and requires him to insert the notice in his paper."

"Oh, does it?" sneered Hira Lal, abandoning his reticence. "And who and what is the Provisional Government?"

"Then you are the editor?"

"I am."

Robertson handed him the notification, which he read through with murmured expressions of contempt, and then tore in pieces, saying as he did so—

"You English dog, that is how I treat your foolish proclamation."

As he spoke he dived, evading the blow aimed at him across the table, and whipped out an automatic from a drawer. Before Robertson could recover his balance, the editor had fired at him point-blank. Fortunately for Robertson he had forgotten to release the safety-catch. The pistol did not go off, and the next moment Hira Lal was bayoneted by a Roughrider, who lunged at him from the door and pinned him against the wall.

Ram Mohun seized the automatic which had dropped from Hira Lal's hand upon the table, and pulled forward the catch, but before he could do anything more he was felled by a blow from Robertson's fist. The Roughrider withdrew his bayonet from the body of Hira Lal, who collapsed on the floor, writhing in agony.

Robertson stooped down and examined him.

" Right through the guts, Stephens," he remarked to the trooper who had run him through. " I'm afraid he's a goner, poor devil. But he asked for it, if anyone did, and it was a close call for me. But for your promptness, Stephens, I should have been the first casualty in this war. Thank you, my lad."

III.

The troopers rendered first aid to the dying man, who responded by groaning and cursing them in English and Bengali. Then they bound Ram Mohun, who showed signs of returning to life.

" This chap we shall take with us," said Robertson. " Tie him up. It isn't his fault that I am still alive. The sooner he's out of the way the better. Call someone in, Stephens, and whistle for the first party."

The arrangement was that one whistle meant that the men in the first car should enter the premises ; two whistles, that the entire detachment was required.

Stephens whistled accordingly, and at the same time all the lights went out.

" Anyone knocked the switch up ? " cried Robertson.

" No," answered the man nearest the door.

" Then they've closed the main switch," said the officer. He switched on his torch. " They know there's something up," he added. " A pretty nest

of conspirators we've stumbled into. Open the door, men, and follow me."

They filed out of the room, dragging Ram Mohun with them, and found themselves in a narrow pitch-dark passage. Groping their way to the head of the stairs, they were about to descend them when there was a flash from below and several shots rang out. Robertson dropped his torch and lurched back with a groan on to Ram Mohun, who kicked at him as he fell.

"They've got me this time," he muttered. "Carry on, sergeant. Shoot the prisoner rather than let him escape, and don't leave the place till you have wrecked the presses."

His voice grew faint. The torch had gone out, and the trooper who had hold of Ram Mohun was almost borne backward by the combined weight of his captain and the prisoner. Then Robertson slid down to the floor.

At that moment the first relief party of Roughriders burst through the door below. They were greeted by a sharp fusillade from six or seven paces away, and there were groans and the sound of one or more bodies falling.

The three Roughriders belonging to Robertson's party now opened fire from above, and evidently registered a hit. A scream was heard, and presently there was a sound as of a scurry followed by a door closing; the assailants, whoever they were, had, from the sound, beaten a retreat.

Sergeant Gibb now called out to the relief party, "Roughriders, we are here on the stairhead. Hold your fire meanwhile, and if any of you have a match, look for the main switch. Prisoner, if you struggle again I'll blow your brains out."

While the party below groped about for the main switch, Sergeant Gibb and his men watched anxiously for the return of the hidden sharpshooters; but

nothing happened, and, as suddenly as they had gone out, the lights came on.

Gibb then saw that at his very feet lay his captain, ghastly and still, with a spreading patch of blood on the right breast of his tunic. By the front door were two prone Roughriders, one of whom at the instant staggered to his feet. Opposite this door at a distance of a few paces was a smaller door, from which the first shots had been obviously fired. Three of the Roughriders were wounded and out of action, out of the seven on the premises. There was an armed and determined enemy behind the door, and the small party on the stairs were hampered still further by their dying leader and a prisoner who persisted in struggling and kicking.

It did not take the sergeant long to make up his mind. He whistled twice in order to call up his entire force. Then he put his revolver to Ram Mohun's ear and fired, killing him instantly. It was no time for squeamishness. There was still important work to be done under conditions of great difficulty and danger. He was determined to carry out his captain's orders, and put the press out of action, cost what it might.

When the second party came at the double to the main door, he ordered four of them to remain on guard outside and shoot at sight any stranger whom they saw leaving or entering the house. Then, ordering the slightly wounded Roughrider to stay by their dying captain and do what he could for him, he led his remaining four comrades to the closed door from where all the mischief had come. There were tell-tale blood-stains before it. They rushed the door and found themselves in the combined composing and machine-room of the 'Tribeni.' A battery of seven linotype machines was lined up against the left wall of a long low shed. In the immediate foreground were several imposing tables,

and on the right a few cases of type, together with two tables—one a small one, evidently used by the foreman printer, and a larger one by the readers. At the far end was the printing press, an old-fashioned rotary, which bore date about the beginning of the century. The foundry was in an outhouse beyond.

The room was brightly lit and reeked with the odour of printer's ink, and the stale fumes of lead and gas from the linotypes. The place looked as though it were a printery in full activity ; but it was completely deserted. The machinery actuating the linotypes was actually running, but there was no sign of a human being. It looked like a printing establishment under enchantment. Obviously the entire staff had disappeared.

There was no time to lose. The sergeant felt that the compositors and pressmen had simply gone to earth, and that they were dangerously close at hand. They might even be watching him as he gave his orders, and at any moment his party might come under fire. But he was not going until he had destroyed this pestilent newspaper, and he set about his work at once. He stationed a man at either end of the room with orders to shoot if they saw anyone within range, and to warn him if any attempt was made to interfere with their wounded. Gibb and the two remaining troopers proceeded to make ' pie ' of the ' Tribeni ' press. On the cylinders they found the stereotyped pages of half the paper. These they hacked with wrenches and hammers until they were unrecognisable. Proceeding to the foundry they extinguished it, and hacked the semi-stereotyped pages to pieces. They returned to the composing room, wrecked the type-cases, and smashed the linotype magazines, overturning them all on to the floor. Then Gibb's keen eye was drawn to the publishing office, where lay piles of printed papers, half the sheet done in the first working. He promptly

set a light to them, and as they blazed up, he withdrew from the press room. The party then made their way eagerly to the passage where the wounded were lying; but as they reached to the top of the stairs, they were arrested by the sight of Winterton, the slightly wounded man, crossing Robertson's arms. He straightened himself as they approached and saluted solemnly. Gibb and his men did the like. A glance at their leader's face was enough.

IV.

They carried their dead captain and the more seriously wounded to the cars, throwing out pickets before and behind, and ready to fight their way if necessary, for the firing had attracted a considerable crowd to the spot; but they were not molested till the cars began to move away. Then several shots were fired, which went over their heads in the dark. A few answering bullets silenced this demonstration, and twenty minutes of furious driving through the deserted streets brought them to the Roughriders' headquarters.

Here Sergeant Gibb reported himself to Major Bellingham, who was acting in command. The body of Captain Robertson was meanwhile lifted out of the car and the three wounded men helped and taken away to have their wounds attended to. Winterton had been shot clean through the shoulder, but no bones had been broken. Slee, another casualty, had a shattered leg.

Major Bellingham listened to Gibb's narrative with a grave face, and when he had finished, despatched him at once to Government House to report direct to the Government. It was half-past three when Jim Montgomery knocked at the door and entered the bureau to inform Colonel Hardy that Sergeant Gibb of Captain Robertson's party

desired to make a report upon the night's work. The others looked at each other questioningly.

"Robertson is a casualty," said Colonel Crichton, voicing their thoughts. The next moment Gibb came in, haggard and blood-stained. He told his story with coolness and precision, after which there was a pause.

"Poor Robertson!" said Hardy with a sigh. "But he died doing his duty. Sergeant Gibb, I commend you for your courage and resourcefulness and for the thoroughness with which your work was done. I am no longer in command, but I hope to see you promoted. Good night."

Gibb saluted and retired. Hardy turned to his colleagues.

"Cossipore seems to be a hotbed," he remarked; "we must deal with it immediately."

"Of course we must," assented Sir Apurbo. "And although I am deeply sorry for Captain Robertson's death, it is at least balanced by the deaths of two of the most unmitigated scoundrels in Bengal."

CHAPTER NINE.

I.

As he drove away from Government House at midnight, General Stewart reflected that he was responsible in two capacities. As Military Governor his outlook was more or less limited to Calcutta, but as General Officer commanding the Presidency and Assam, he was answerable for the military wellbeing of Bengal. Returning to the Fort, his first care was to send a small convoy of lorries to Barrackpore to bring away the few women and children who were left. A motor cyclist took the road at the same time, carrying instructions to the senior officer at the station to disarm the native troops, and he was uncertain as to the result. Should they fail to be disarmed, the mutiny would break out at once, and then any defenceless English people who were on the spot would infallibly be murdered. The motor cyclist also had orders to go round to all the residents and warn them of the possible danger awaiting them.

Then the General telephoned to the commanding officers of the Caledonians and the Port Artillery, informing them of his interview with the Provisional Government, and requesting them to confer with him immediately on the measures to be taken that morning. Meanwhile he summoned the first and second in command respectively of the Sikh and Brahmin regiments which were stationed in the Fort, and whom it was his purpose to disarm.

He found it extremely difficult, however, to convince them of the necessity for this measure. Like most Englishmen serving in the Indian Army, they were devoted to their men and fanatically persuaded

of their loyalty. It was the same in 1857. It will doubtless be the same in 2057! Colonel Black of the Sikhs was ready, he said, to stake his life upon the good faith of his regiment. Colonel Hodson of the Brahmins was equally positive. The story of the plot was a d——d civilian invention.

The arrival of Major Macdonald (acting for Colonel Crichton as commandant of the Caledonians) and of Colonel Mesechre of the Port Artillery threw a new light on things. These men were not mewed up in the Fort, like the two regular officers. In private life they were both business men, in touch with all kinds of people, and they speedily convinced the soldiers that the whole city knew of the wavering of both the Sikhs and the Brahmins.

"Ask old Bates, the Commissioner of Police, if you don't believe us," said Major Macdonald, a red Highlander from Lewis. "He knows a good deal more about your men than you do."

"Well, gentlemen," said the General pleasantly, "if you have done with this preliminary skirmishing, I will put before you the orders I think it desirable to issue."

The discussion lasted till two o'clock. Colonels Black and Hodson, though clinging desperately to the hope that their men were less culpable than they seemed in the eyes of everybody else, were constrained to admit the wisdom of disarming them as a measure of precaution. General Stewart's plan was approved with very slight alterations in detail, and the six field officers withdrew to make the necessary arrangements with regard to their respective corps.

At half-past five the Caledonians marched into the Fort and took up their position on No. 2 parade ground. The battalion was over strength. It consisted of a nucleus of burly jute brokers and merchants, supplemented by stalwarts in other walks of

life, including tea, coal, general imports and trade. The Caledonians were disposed in two single lines facing each other along the entire length of the parade ground. At either end detachments were drawn up in double ranks, the machine-gun section being camouflaged behind one of these formations.

The two Indian regiments paraded separately. The Sikhs came first, because General Stewart anticipated little trouble in dealing with them. The Sikhs are as brave as lions but as stupid as bulls, and the General hoped that in their case the element of surprise would be sufficient to paralyse any resistance which they might be inclined to offer.

At six o'clock the Sikhs marched on to No. 2 parade ground.

The regiment was drawn up in quarter column and dressed for the last time, the officers inspecting the ranks and incidentally slurring over defects which would have called forth strong reproofs at any ordinary parade. Colonel Black took command.

He gave the order to fix bayonets—obeyed without a murmur. "Slope arms—order arms!" There was a pause. Then came the critical command, "Ground arms!"

Even the Sikhs could not mistake the significance of this requisition. To ground arms with fixed bayonets is unheard of. The order could only mean that for some reason they were to part both with their rifles and their side-arms. Were they suspect? Had they been betrayed? These thoughts flashed through their minds, or rather lit up dimly in their inner consciousness; but the Sikh is not quick at the uptake. The men were taken completely by surprise, and as no one gave them a lead, the habit of discipline overcame the sudden impulse to question the command. After a perceptible pause, during which every officer held his breath, they obeyed.

Grounding arms with fixed bayonets is an awkward business, taking a second or two longer in the performance than the same operation with the plain rifle. It was duly carried out, however, and the regiment came to attention. There was another pause, during which it would have been difficult to say who were the more uneasy—the men or their officers.

"About turn!" The battalion faced about, and found itself looking into the muzzles of six wicked-looking machine-guns, which had been quietly unmasked during the preliminary manœuvres. Any one of them, they knew, could annihilate the entire regiment in five minutes. The whole six, which were manned and ready for action, could duplicate the performance in about as many seconds. A tremor ran through the ranks.

"Left turn!" They were only allowed sufficient time to take in the position of the machine-guns when the voice of the Colonel once more claimed their attention.

They turned to the left, knowing that at any moment they might be raked pitilessly by the machine-guns on their right.

Colonel Black had ridden round to the right of the battalion, and now, fronting the men, he addressed them in Gurmukhi, more in sorrow than in anger. He reminded them of the trust and confidence which he had always reposed in them, and upbraided them bitterly for having betrayed their officers and the Sirkar by plotting for the overthrow of British rule. Had they and their fathers fought honourably for the British flag only to be untrue to their salt at the last?

"Brothers," he ended, "God only knows what has put this into your hearts. I am merely a man and cannot tell. But the Sirkar cannot continue to be served by those who would betray it. You will

be disarmed and imprisoned until you see the error of your ways."

The command " Right turn " was now given, and once again the dazed battalion obeyed, turning to face the machine-guns, with determined Caledonians behind them, ready to use them at an instant's notice.

A corps of armourers now passed between the ranks, collecting the grounded arms quickly and almost noiselessly. In ten minutes the rifles and bayonets had disappeared from the parade ground.

The Caledonians were now ordered to " Left and right turn." The Sikhs at the word of command turned about and formed fours, the whole parade received the command " Quick march " ; and so, within a quarter of an hour after marching on to the ground, the Sikhs moved off prisoners between Caledonian files, while the machine-guns brought up the rear.

They were marched to their barracks, where they were presently penned in, and every opening was filled by machine-guns, or by field-guns manned by the Port Artillery. Meanwhile the armoury had been busy forging extra handcuffs. It was obviously impossible to confine a whole mutinous regiment in a barrack and to leave its hands free. A little later in the day the men were paraded separately, handcuffed, and thrown into a disused barrack which had been fortified and turned into a military prison. Several of them resisted ; half a dozen were shot ; but by noon the —— Sikhs were not only disarmed, but put completely out of action as a factor in the projected mutiny of 1957.

II.

The disarming of the Brahmins proved a more difficult business. It had been arranged to take the Sikhs first, in order to leave the Caledonians free

to help with the Brahmins in case of necessity; for the same reason it had been decided to parade the Brahmins later than the Sikhs and upon No. 1 parade ground, which was commanded by the barracks manned by the three companies of the Essex Regiment, the sole representatives in Calcutta of the British Regular Army. In the case of the Brahmins there was no overt display of British force. Machine-guns were placed at every opening on the verandah of the barrack, and the entire verandah was lined with Essex riflemen. Round either corner from the parade ground and well out of sight, the Port Artillery with more machine-guns and riflemen were stationed.

News of the disarmament of the Sikhs had, of course, filtered through to the Brahmins. In India news travels thousands of miles in an hour, and General Stewart and his colleagues had allowed for the probability—indeed, the certainty—that the Brahmins, although they were in another part of the Fort, and the Sikhs had been disarmed without the firing of any tell-tale shots, would get wind of the matter.

This certainly complicated things. In the first place, the Brahmins were much smarter men than the Sikhs. In the second place, it gave their leaders a few minutes in which to plan some counter-move. The great danger was that they would parade with rifles surreptitiously loaded, for the officers dared not take any Indian non-commissioned officers into their confidence, neither dared they approach the men's quarters themselves before the parade. Nor dared they examine arms on parade, for that might have precipitated the mutiny. The risk that the Brahmins might parade with loaded rifles had to be taken, and it was.

At 6.30 the Brahmins marched in fours to No. 1 parade ground, and were formed in quarter column. It was obvious at a glance that they were greatly

excited. They looked round them in every direction, with utter disregard to discipline. Their dress was untidy, so much so that the whole regiment would have been confined to barracks for the offence in ordinary times. There were mutterings in the ranks as they stood to attention. Resolutely ignoring these portents, the company officers carried out a cursory inspection, and the moment they were clear of the ranks Colonel Hodson rode forward.

" —— Brahmins ! " he commanded, " slope arms ! Order arms ! Front ranks about turn ! "

The quicker intelligence of the Brahmin ringleaders divined that this command was preliminary to piling arms—a manœuvre which would have left them helpless.

Instantly the voice of Ram Tewari, the chief conspirator, was raised for the first and last time on parade. Its fierce high-pitched tones sent a thrill through the entire assembly.

" Brothers, we are betrayed ! Death to the English pigs ! *Kali Mai ki Jai !* "

As he spoke Ram Tewari fired at the Colonel, shooting him through the head and killing him instantly. The report was drowned in the answering shout that went up from 800 throats of " *Kali Mai ki Jai !* " (" Victory to the Mother ! ") Before the echoes of this blood-curdling cry had died away a fusillade broke out, and three more officers were unhorsed. The others galloped off the parade ground—the last thing they would have done if this very development had not been foreseen.

The moment the mutineers opened fire they were raked by a murderous reply from the barrack verandah, and fell in heaps. They realised immediately that they were enfiladed, and after a feeble attempt to reply they broke and fled, rushing round either corner of the barrack in a wild attempt to escape from the fatal parade ground.

When they turned the corner they were faced by the machine-guns and riflemen of the Port Artillery, who immediately opened fire. Some of the distracted wretches rushed back to the parade ground. Others took refuge in the outhouses or in the drains. Half a dozen actually got past the barrier of fire, and, wild with terror, without arms, mounted the rampart and plunged into the moat, in which all but one were drowned.

In a few minutes the mutiny was over, the order to cease fire was given, and the entire native force in Fort William was disarmed. The Brahmins had lost half their complement in killed and wounded, and the rest surrendered unconditionally. The British loss was two officers killed (Colonel Hodson being one of them) and two wounded, and a couple of dozen of the rank and file wounded and killed in the mêlée.

General Stewart looked very grave and thoughtful when the casualties were reported to him.

"Poor Hodson!" he said. "How he loved his men and believed in them! I don't think we could have got out of it much cheaper," he added. "But remember, gentlemen, we are only at the beginning of our troubles."

III.

At nine o'clock that morning, General Stewart, who had telephoned to Hardy announcing the disarmament of the native regiments, presented himself at Government House, and was ushered straightway into the presence of the four. Hardy and his colleagues had not moved from their places since they had taken them at 10.30 the previous evening. Business of all kinds had demanded their constant attention. Two of the Divisional Commissioners had been difficult; they had refused to give heed either to the telephonic or to the wireless messages

despatched to them, and it had been necessary to post the orders of the Government by aeroplane. These had just been received in Rajshahi and Chittagong respectively, and the Commissioners had telephoned their adhesion to the Government. A long telephonic conversation had then ensued between Hardy and the Commissioner of Rajshahi. The Commissioner assured him of his loyal co-operation, but had questioned the wisdom of promulgating the announcement that the ordinary Government had been suspended. He pointed out that all the magistrates and most of the police officers under him were Indians of doubtful loyalty, and that any upsetting of the *status quo* might tempt them to throw off their allegiance. The forces of disorder would then be unloosed to wreak their vengeance upon the few English and Anglo-Indians left in the Division. After a brief consultation with his colleagues, Hardy had authorised him to delay the announcement as long as he thought fit, but had reminded him that news of the *coup d'état* was bound to reach the districts in the course of a very short time. He directed him, therefore, to arrange to evacuate the European and Anglo-Indian residents at once, and send them if possible by aeroplane to Calcutta. This the Commissioner had agreed to do.

From two o'clock onwards reports had begun to come in from the officers told off to seize the various departments of Government. At three o'clock Captain Wilson brought back only one of the prisoners he had been instructed to make. The others, he reported, had got wind of the impending raid, and had literally flown—had gone off by air, probably to Delhi. Warnings had been issued to aerial and land police to intercept them. One way and another the members of the Government had had no time to think of rest or sleep.

It was, therefore, a somewhat haggard four who received General Stewart, immaculate in his smart khaki and red tabs. The General had had at least four hours' sleep since he had parted from them, and had risen from a hearty breakfast, preceded by a refreshing bath. It was on the tip of his tongue to read them a fatherly lecture on the unwisdom of burning the candle at both ends, but a glance at Hardy's resolute face prevented him. Also Hardy got his blow in first.

"General Stewart," he said, "I thank you in the name of the Government for your prompt and vigorous action. You have averted the gravest danger that threatened Calcutta."

"I don't know about that, sir," replied the General. "After all, the mutinous regiments had only one or two heads, and it was comparatively easy to lop them off. Now we have to deal with the Hydra of Calcutta itself. By the way, where shall I set up my office as Military Governor?"

"In the Legislative Council building," answered Hardy, with his rare smile. "You had better make yourself comfortable in the private room of the President. He will have no occasion to use it for some time to come."

The General, too, smiled. "An excellent plan, Mr President," he commented, "which has the double advantage of giving me very comfortable headquarters and bringing me close to the seat of Government."

"There is one more advantage," added Robert Clough, "and that is that it will enable you to keep a specially sharp eye upon the High Court and the Bar Library. I don't know which I regard with the greater suspicion at the present moment."

The General saluted and withdrew. The Legislative Council building stood within a stone's throw

of Government House and the High Court, and the General, after leaving the precincts of Government House, turned his car in that direction.

IV.

At half-past nine, a wireless message was brought in from the Sultan of Jehanabad. In acknowledging Hardy's wireless announcing the Provisional Government, it mentioned that an aeroplane was being despatched from Jehanabad next day to bring away the Princess Roshanara.

While his colleagues slipped away to bathe, shave, and change, and incidentally to have a little breakfast, Hardy sent an orderly in search of the Princess with a message inquiring if she could see him. Being given to understand that she could, he made his way to the private apartments, which were a very short distance from the room of which the Provisional Government were in occupation.

He was admitted to the presence of Roshanara. How charming she looked, he thought, every fresh view of her increasing his admiration. Gracious and exquisitely turned out, the Princess looked more beautiful than ever, and showed no other sign of having passed a night full of excitement and anxiety than an unwonted seriousness.

"Good morning, Colonel Hardy," she greeted him, while her eyes took in his tired and weary appearance. "I suppose you have heard from my brother. But before we go any further, have you had any breakfast?"

"No, Princess. I have had too much to do to think about it."

"I felt sure somehow that you had forgotten it. You must have some at once."

The Princess turned, rang the bell, and on the

appearance of a servant gave the order for breakfast to be served in her rooms without delay.

"We can talk as you eat, and so save time," she said as she seated herself near him. "And now what is the news of my brother?"

"I wirelessed him about the formation of the Provisional Government," answered Hardy. "In reply he tells me he is ready to act according to plan. He also mentions that he is despatching a plane to-day to take you back to Jehanabad. You ought to be able to leave Calcutta to-morrow."

Breakfast was brought in on a tray, and Roshanara herself waited on him. Tired and hungry as he was, his face lit up as he looked at her. On her side the maternal instinct surged up as she fed this man, who had gripped her interest more than any man she had ever known. He ate heartily, and they talked little. He inquired after Lady Bowles, and was concerned to hear that she had spent the whole night in the drawing-room with her guests.

"I don't see what else we could have done with the ladies," he said. "But I am exceedingly sorry Lady Bowles was so inconvenienced. By the way, Princess, I take it you will be ready to leave Calcutta to-morrow?"

"Yes, if there is no more work for me to do here; but I somehow feel that there is work for me to do. Remember I am Sister Rosamund of the St John Ambulance. I am a good organiser. I can motor and pilot an aeroplane. I am quite a useful person, and it strikes me, Colonel Hardy, that you have not too many women to co-operate with you."

"You are perfectly right, Princess—hardly any at all."

"Then ought I not to stay here—at all events in the meantime?"

"You could certainly find plenty of work to do if you did stay."

"That settles it. I will not go back to Jehanabad to-morrow."

"And your brother?"

"Dear old Bay! He can get on without me for the present, and he would be the last to wish to recall me if he knew I was doing useful work here."

CHAPTER TEN.

I.

PRECEDED by an Essex guard, General Stewart installed himself in the Legislative Council building within half an hour. The Bengali caretaker and the other officials were at first inclined to object to the intrusion of the military, but the sergeant of the guard used so little ceremony that in five minutes he had the whole establishment at his feet. The luxurious private room of the President of the Council was hastily put in order for the Military Governor, and General Stewart resolved to take up his quarters permanently at the Legislative building, and to manage the Presidency and Assam as well as the citizens of Calcutta from that point of vantage.

Sentries were posted at the entrance and an armed orderly stood guard over his door, while he himself also carried arms.

A telephonic message to the Municipal office brought round to him in five minutes, David Williams, the smart Civilian who had just been appointed Municipal Commissioner, replacing the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Calcutta. Williams, a dapper Welshman of thirty-five, whose speech still smacked of Carnarvonshire, was as confident and efficient as any member of the Civil Service—and that is some confidence. He was Collector of Customs, but, as an *ex officio* member of the Corporation, he knew a great deal about municipal affairs; and as trade had practically ceased for the time being, there were obvious advantages in transferring him from a post where he was eating his head off, to one in which he could usefully co-operate with the Mili-

tary Governor. With him—and a shorthand writer —General Stewart was closeted for an hour.

Before the public of Calcutta had recovered from its surprise at the notification published by the Provisional Government, the new Military Governor issued a long order signed " J. C. Stewart, Major-General, Military Governor of Calcutta." This order reminded all and sundry that martial law had been set up, within the municipal limits of Greater Calcutta, and that the General had been nominated to see that it was carried out.

It assured the public that no loyal or peaceable citizen would be molested, but made this assurance strictly conditional upon the most implicit obedience to every command bearing the Military Governor's signature. It then set forth, in peremptory language, a series of directions, among which were the following :—

1. All motor-cars—that is to say, in particular all Wage-Price, Reynolds, Mereweather, and Dinwoodie automobiles—to be passed over to the military authorities within twenty-four hours. Also all private aeroplanes.

(The reason of this requisition was patent to the youngest reader of the notice. There were a hundred or two of these high-class automobiles and as many planes in Calcutta, and most of them belonged to wealthy Indians. Their owners, if loyal, ought to be overjoyed at the opportunity of aiding the Government by lending it their conveyances whether by road or air. If they were not loyal, the commandeering of their cars and aeroplanes would tend to lessen their capacity for mischief.)

2. No one " except a European, or a person holding a permit signed by me," should stir out of his house between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M.
3. That every lawyer (vakil, solicitor, barrister,

or advocate) should within the same period hand the Military Governor a list containing the names and addresses of every clerk or chaprassie in his employ.

(In this case General Stewart went to the trouble of explaining matters for the benefit of his readers. It had been noticed, he said, that lawyers' clerks and other legal hangers-on had been especially busy in spreading seditious ideas and literature. Hence this requisition, which incidentally conveyed a powerful hint to their employers.)

4. No shops or bazaars to be closed, no hartal (that favourite Indian method of demonstrating dissatisfaction with the powers that be). If any shopkeeper closed his establishment, it would be forcibly opened and its contents confiscated.
5. No meeting numbering more than ten persons to be held.
6. Any attempt to molest or assault the representatives of the Government would be met by the destruction of all property within a radius of one hundred yards of the scene of the occurrence.

There were other requisitions, and the public was informed, in terms of the utmost brevity, that any neglect to obey them would be punished summarily, and that any attempt to resist them might be punished with death.

In order to visualise the stunning effect of this departure upon the man in the street, it must be remembered that for years he had been encouraged to look upon British rule as moribund. He had seen English people insulted, assaulted, even murdered with apparent impunity. He had seen Indians displacing them in every branch of the public service, and had come to view them with a contempt vaguely

qualified by a reminiscent fear. He had acquired a growing disrespect for British law—indeed, for law of every kind. To find himself thus suddenly staring into the muzzle of stark martial law, gave him a shock from which he required an entire day to recover.

The order, placarded throughout the city, and reproduced in all the newspapers next day, was received with mixed feelings. A very large number of Bengalis read it with relief and thankfulness. The middle-class Bengali, left to himself, was a strong believer in the *pax Britannica,* and a convinced beneficiary of the blessings it had brought to him and his. All he asked for was that it should continue, and that it should be maintained with firmness. The weakness of the administration during recent years had inspired him with disgust. The overthrow of Sir James Bowles and his Government, and the vigorous measures which were now being taken for the restoration of British authority, filled him with hope and confidence.

But he had become accustomed to conceal his real feelings. The forces of disorder had held the reins of power so long that it was unsafe to range oneself on the British side. Thus the loyal Bengali, of whom there were many thousands in Calcutta, had effaced himself. He was well intentioned, but not brave. Even now he preferred to wait and see what happened.

As for the seditious element and the active conspirators for the downfall of British power, they were no less taken by surprise. Their leaders had deserted them. Captain Wilson, sent off by Hardy to arrest eight men the moment the Provisional Government was established, had found them all flown except one—a sly old ex-editor, who posed as half-saint, half-philosopher, who wrote for the English press, and was mistakenly thought to be harmless. The others had gone off in two or more planes;

their destination was uncertain, but was believed to be Delhi.

The disloyal element was thus for the moment paralysed. Hence the quiescence which it displayed on the first day of the new régime. Neither Hardy nor the Military Governor was deceived by this circumstance. They knew that sedition and rebellion were only biding their time.

II.

At two o'clock that afternoon a unique application was made in the High Court of Calcutta, against "the *soi-disant* Provisional Government of Bengal and the so-called Military Governor of Calcutta." Mr Kedar Nath Sen, a prominent member of the seditious Bar, whose name had somehow escaped inclusion in the list of proscripts, applied to the Chief Justice, Sir Ganesh Chowdry, and to Mr Justice Halder, for an injunction restraining the Government and General Stewart from the exercise of the functions they were charged with usurping, and for any further orders which their lordships might be pleased to make. As it happened, the High Court was in vacation, and the Chief Justice and Mr Justice Halder, constituting the vacation bench, were the only two judges in session.

Intimation of this move was conveyed to the Provisional Government a few minutes before the application. The reporter was an enterprising young barrister who was not altogether without hopes of being briefed by Hardy and his associates to oppose the injunction.

Robert Clough smiled grimly as he thanked him for the information.

"We shall not forget this, Sircar," he said as the young lawyer withdrew, and then he turned and looked at his colleagues.

"Can you beat that?" he said. "Can you imagine a thing like this happening outside of Bengal? An injunction against us! And Chowdry is easily fool enough to grant it, and to have it delivered by the ordinary process server!"

Hardy meanwhile was calling up General Stewart on the telephone. A few brief sentences explained the situation to him, and he was directed to stop the proceedings; the method of doing so was left to himself.

The Military Governor immediately ordered out a company of the Essex Regiment under Captain Chavasse. During the ten minutes which elapsed while they were coming from the Fort, he drafted a new notification, which was afterwards published under the daily orders issued by his authority. As soon as the company arrived, it paraded before the legislative building, and after Captain Chavasse had received his instructions, it was immediately marched to the High Court, a few hundred yards away.

Here in the courtyard Captain Chavasse left a platoon with two machine-guns under his senior subaltern, the quadrangle being occupied in such a manner that every entrance and exit was commanded. He himself with the other platoon and the junior subaltern, Moncrieff, filed up the winding stairs on to the first floor where the courts were held.

The High Court was a fine old building, modelled on that of the old Cloth Hall of Ypres, which was battered down by the Germans in the war of 1914-1918. The party emerged on the upper verandah, just outside the Chief Justice's court. Chavasse did not need to ask whose court it was. The crowd of lawyers, litigants, and hangers-on who filled it to overflowing and surged round the approaches, advertised the fact that something out of the ordinary was proceeding in it.

III.

Meanwhile an unusual scene was being enacted before the Chief Justice and his colleague. The courtroom was a large square hall, extremely lofty and with Gothic fanlights some twenty-five feet from the ground. It was partly lit from these fanlights, and partly from a verandah opposite to the public entrance—a verandah which was forbidden to all except the judges. At one end was a high raised platform, equipped with a heavy table, behind which sat the Chief Justice and Mr Justice Halder. To their right was the jury box, a little below them sat the Clerk of the Court, and, facing these three dignitaries, at a still lower level, was placed another long table reserved for the members of the Bar. Behind them came several yards of floor space, then a dock, and behind the dock a series of benches, placed tier on tier, for the accommodation of the public.

On this occasion the Court was packed to suffocation. The Bar was standing six deep behind the table sacred to its occasions, and behind the Bar were crammed hundreds of people, all Indians. They were anti-British to a man, and had crowded into the Chief Justice's court to enjoy what they fondly hoped would be the discomfiture and disappearance of the Provisional Government and of martial law.

The Chief Justice, Sir Ganesh Chowdry, looked the part. He was a fine-looking man of sixty, set off by Meredith's "strong grey head." He was clean-shaven, his features were aquiline and handsome, his complexion pallid. Indian judges had forsworn the wig for more than a century, but, crowned with horse hair, Sir Ganesh Chowdry would have looked exactly like an English judge

of the King's Bench. He wore a black gown and white bands. Mr Justice Halder looked fat and commonplace beside him.

It must, however, be admitted that as Chief Justice of Bengal, Sir Ganesh Chowdry was looks *et praeterea nihil.* He had been an able advocate and had a good knowledge of the law, but his preferment had been purely political, and now that he had attained the highest judicial position in Bengal, he took care, like Dr Johnson, that the "Whig dogs should not get the best of it." In other words, he was out for justice to Indians only. When their interests clashed with those of English people, the latter always went by the board. He was filled, too, with a great sense of his own importance—with, in fact, the superiority complex which had seized upon nearly every class and every profession amongst educated Bengalis.

Mr Justice Halder was an ordinary vakil judge, dark complexioned, spectacled and commonplace.

There was a tense atmosphere in the Court as Mr Kedar Nath Sen rose to apply "on behalf of the citizens of Calcutta, and particularly on behalf of our outraged legal profession," for an injunction against the *soi-disant* Provisional Government of Bengal and against the so-called Military Governor of Calcutta. The Chief Justice knew pretty much what Mr Sen had to say; indeed, he had discussed the matter with him in chambers that morning, and had already arranged his own epoch-making judgment on the point at issue. But he affected total ignorance of all the facts now brought before him, and listened to Kedar Nath's eloquence with an assumed air of profound wisdom and judicial impartiality. In effect he was enjoying this historic opportunity at least as much as Kedar Nath enjoyed the advertisement which he was now obtaining.

Kedar Nath Sen was an ambitious young barrister

of thirty—eloquent, vain, and self-confident. His progress at the Bar had been rapid, and he promised himself that hereafter it was to be still more rapid. He wore no spectacles. His hair glistened, as though it had been dipped in oil, and his thick moustache as if the hand which perpetually caressed it was equally greasy. He had a harsh metallic voice.

Twitching his gown forward in the approved style as he rose to address the Court, Mr Sen proceeded to deliver himself of a highly eloquent speech. It was addressed at least as much to his inflammable audience and to the invisible public as to their lordships. It was listened to with rapt attention, punctuated by applause from the public galleries, which neither the judge nor the officers of the court attempted to suppress. It was, in fact, Mr Sen's day out.

He described in detail the offences of which the Europeans of Calcutta had been guilty during the past six months, and in particular how they had armed and drilled on the maidan. Then he came to the attempt of the Legislative Chamber to grapple with the problem by resolution.

"The immediate consequence of that resolution, passed only yesterday, my Lords," he added dramatically, "has been that our popular and well-loved Governor is a close prisoner in Government House, that the Legislative Chamber has been expelled from its own house to make way for a so-called Military Governor of Calcutta, and that the lives and liberties of every citizen are now at the mercy of a small group of Europeans, who have usurped power under the name and style of the Provisional Government."

Counsel then described the raid upon Government House, and held forth for several minutes upon the enormities committed in connection with it, especially upon the haling of twenty or thirty

Bengali gentlemen to the Fort, and the detention of as many ladies at Government House until morning.

"But that is not all," he continued. "The soldier whom they have called in to their assistance and appointed Military Governor has justified his appointment by the issue of a proclamation staggering in its insolence. He has commandeered the best cars and planes belonging to our wealthy and respectable citizens, has forbidden meetings, has imposed the curfew, and as if that were not enough, has required every lawyer to furnish him with the names and addresses of all his employees on the allegation that they have been guilty of sedition!

"We say, my Lords, that this cannot go on, and we ask your Lordships to issue an injunction restraining these men from continuing in their violent and unlawful career."

IV.

The excited buzz which arose as the Judge scanned the affidavits was suddenly hushed. Shouts and orders were heard in the passage outside the Court. The crowd of heads at the door disappeared one by one with violent jerks, as though they had been pulled from outside. The clash of rifle-butts could be heard on the stone floor, and the glint of bayonets could be seen through the glass partition. Those who saw them grew pale. The Chief Justice looked up from his papers with a frown.

"What is the meaning of this noise?" he demanded of the Clerk of the Court. "I will have the Court cleared unless silence is restored."

The Clerk made no reply, and Sir Ganesh Chowdry, looking down sharply at him, saw his mouth wide open, and gazed in the direction in which he was staring, at the main entrance to the courtroom.

Two khaki-clad figures were making their way into the Court, using their rifle-butts and pushing aside unceremoniously anyone who stood in their way. They were followed by two more, and then two more, and advanced steadily to the Bar. The incoming soldiers were like a bristling wedge forcing its way through the crowd of lawyers and litigants, who fell over each other in trying to make a passage for the intruders. Eventually the greater part of Moncrieff's platoon got in, and formed in two ranks between the dock and the Bar.

Captain Chavasse, seeing that they were drawn up as evenly as they could be expected to be, calmly mounted the Bench and advanced to the table at which their Lordships were sitting. He was followed by six men with fixed bayonets, who faced the Bar and the public, and stood at ease.

Chavasse raised his hand to his helmet, and the Chief Justice found his voice at last.

"Who are you, sir?" he asked, wheeling his chair round to the right, so as to face Chavasse, "and what do you mean by this insolent display of armed force?"

Chavasse did not answer him at once. He turned to the body of the Court, and, raising his voice, cried out—

"Let everyone keep silence. My men have orders to shoot at the slightest disturbance."

Turning again to the Bench, he answered the Chief Justice's inquiry.

"I am Edward Chavasse, Captain in His Majesty's Army, and I am here by order of the Military Governor of Calcutta. I take it that you, sir, are the Chief Justice of Bengal?"

Sir Ganesh inclined his head. It seemed the only dignified thing to do.

"Where is Kedar Nath Sen?" asked Chavasse, wheeling round so as to face the Bar again.

After a pause the gentleman indicated stood up.

"I am Kedar Nath Sen," he replied with an air of bravado, "and I am under the protection of my Lord the Chief Justice and of this honourable Court."

"Seize that man," commanded Chavasse. Kedar Nath was promptly grappled with and forced out of his seat by two soldiers.

"Take him off to the Fort," was the next command, which was instantly obeyed. The erstwhile eloquent advocate was conducted unresistingly to the door, and disappeared. The spectators, covered by the rifles of the soldiers on the Bench, remained silent and inert. All except Sir Ganesh Chowdry, who rose to his feet, pale with fury.

"Captain!" he exclaimed, "if there is any respect left for law in this country, if there is any justice in England, you and those who have sent you will pay dearly for this day's work. In the meantime I refuse to permit this Court to be turned into a barrack yard. The Court stands adjourned *sine die*, and I at least will not return to it until the authorities have put down this rebellion against the Crown and the Law."

He pushed back his chair and turned as if about to leave the Bench. Chavasse forced him to sit down again. The spectators gasped.

"Wait, my Lord," he said. "It is not for you to adjourn this Court. I have here a notification from the Military Governor, ordering the total closing of the High Court and the Bar Library till further orders. I will now read it."

In a loud voice, compelling attention, he proceeded to read General Stewart's notification as follows:—

> "It has been brought to my notice that certain evil-disposed persons are having resort

to the High Court in order to impede the actions of the Provisional Government and interfere with the operations of martial law. This cannot be tolerated, and I therefore direct that the High Court and the Bar Library be closed until further orders. The lawyers of Calcutta, from the judges downwards, must clearly understand that under martial law the Military Governor both makes the laws and interprets them, that there is no appeal from his decisions, and that the penalty for disobeying them is death. I hereby order every person connected with the High Court, except the caretakers, to forthwith proceed to his home, and not to return to the Courts without special permission from myself. Anyone found on these premises one hour after the reading of this notification is liable to be shot.

" (Sgd.) J. C. STEWART,
Major-General,
" Military Governor of Calcutta.

" *6th November* 1957."

The reading of the notification was listened to in intense silence. Captain Chavasse handed the paper to a sergeant, drew his sword, and, turning to the two Judges, saluted and said, " I will escort you first to your cars, gentlemen. Moncrieff," he called out to that officer in the back of the Court, " see that these people leave the Court in an orderly manner."

The public door was opened, and a *sauve qui peut* ensued. Everyone rushed towards it, and half a dozen stout barristers became firmly wedged between the door-posts. Behind them was a pushing, shouting panic-stricken crowd intent only on getting away from the scene. Men fell and were trampled upon. The soldiers intervened, and restored a semblance

of order. But the general eagerness to quit rendered the task a difficult one. Never had the High Court so nearly resembled pandemonium.

The Chief Justice had risen slowly with every intention of making a protest which should become historic; but as the entire crowd had their backs to him and were fiercely struggling to get away, he shrugged his shoulders and turned to leave the Bench, darting a look of hatred at Chavasse.

"You will live to regret this day's work, Captain Chavasse," was all he could bring himself to say.

Chavasse received the remark with aggravating coolness.

"I daresay you are right, Judge," he replied. "Mind the step."

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

I.

THE Provisional Government (reinforced from eleven o'clock on Thursday morning by Nawab Ahmed Ali) remained in perpetual session. The members took it in turns to withdraw for brief intervals of sleep. Three hours sufficed Hardy. The others required four.

Nawab Ahmed Ali, having enjoyed a long night's rest, scorned these distractions. He was stout, easy-going, fully persuaded that the British were justified in rising, and prepared to endorse everything that the others approved.

The second night brought bad news from Rajshahi and Bihar. The jail at Rajshahi had been opened by the treachery of the warders ; some of the inmates escaping had attacked isolated Europeans, and two unfortunate people—one of them a woman—had been done to death. In the coalfields there had been a kind of labour upheaval, and, led by agitators, Jherria and Burrakur had been overrun. The loss of European life had been heavy. The Bihar Yeomanry had turned out, but had found the mobs armed, and had themselves suffered losses, without making any impression on the rebels. A special train containing refugees had been held up at Asansol by a railway strike. Hardy was implored to send up a motor detachment to bring them into Calcutta by road. He shook his head when Crichton endorsed this request.

"We should only lose the motor detachment without doing the refugees any good," he said. "Always remember that our first duty is to Calcutta. So long as we hold the key, the restoration of the

position generally is only a question of time. But we haven't yet got sedition by the throat in Calcutta."

Agitated messages from Delhi began to pour in. The Government of India—or what was left of it—had heard rumours of an outbreak in Calcutta, and could not understand the silence of Sir James Bowles. It was briefly informed that Sir James Bowles had appointed a Provisional Government (names given), and that martial law had been proclaimed. Still more agitated, Delhi demanded a full account of why the Governor had taken this extraordinary action, what he was doing, what the Provisional Government was doing, why it was doing it, &c., &c.

This requisition was ignored. Delhi then sent further messages, which grew steadily more insistent, until suddenly there was a great silence. This seemed ominous, but Hardy and his colleagues had their hands too full to permit of their following up the mystery during the whole of the next day.

II.

Night had brought counsel to the conspirators, who had been temporarily put out of action by the raid on their leaders, and by the leaders' precipitate flight. Arms were now brought out of their hiding-places, and communications were established with the seventy or eighty jute mills sprinkled along the banks of the Hooghly. The labour population of the jute mills numbered more than half a million, both Hindu and Mohammedan. It was a dangerous mass of brutalised men and women, who were less amenable than other elements because they had been uprooted from their native soil. The average industrial labourer in India is only incidentally an industrial labourer. He is essentially an agriculturist,

and his main interest is centred in his plot of land. Uproot him from his native village, and he becomes little better than an outcast.

The mill population on the Hooghly had for many years offered an ideal breeding-ground for discontent. Naturally it had attracted the attention of every agitator in Bengal, and not least that of the anti-British conspirators. Under the régime of Sir James Bowles, and actively encouraged from Whitehall, sedition had been specially busy during the past year. The mill hands had been led to look forward to the time, rapidly approaching, when the hated *sahib-log* would no longer lord it over them ; when wages would be quadrupled, work divided by half, and land theirs for the asking.

Some of the most intelligent among them were secretly armed ; and although the vast majority had nothing but knives and lathis, the armed minority made up a force sufficiently formidable, in a region where Europeans were comparatively few and scattered. Nay, given a discontented populace in Calcutta, they were capable of threatening the capital itself.

III.

Rumours of the downfall of the Bengal Government had spread up and down the river by midnight on Thursday, and several of the mills promptly went on strike. A strike was a comparatively common occurrence in the jute mill area in those days, but these strikes were signalised by immediate and organised attacks on the managers and European assistants. There were three fatalities, and a number of women and children were sent down to Calcutta by river.

Emissaries from the Calcutta conspirators were busy all that afternoon and night. By Friday morning every mill was idle. Several of them were

in flames, and many of the Europeans attached to them were beaten to death. Then the hands, excited partly as the result of agitation, partly by liquor, and partly by the lust of loot, began to move on Calcutta in masses like the migrations of the Huns and Tartars.

The movement was observed from the air, which had been ceaselessly patrolled since Thursday morning, and was promptly reported to the Government. Hardy and Stewart acted as promptly. The two bridges spanning the Hooghly were manned and closed, and the main road leading into Calcutta from Barrackpore was mined.

Then a warning notice in the vernaculars, prepared the previous day, was distributed to the rioters from the air, and was laughed at. The masses moved on in the direction of Calcutta, forming an admirable target for the bombing planes; and bombs were dropped accordingly.

The air attack scattered the rioters, but it could not stop the advance. Some of the mill hands bolted back towards their lines, but others fled towards Calcutta, and were mown down by the machine-guns posted at the bridge-heads. The Barrackpore road mine was detonated, and killed several hundreds, effectually checking the invasion from that side. The mass movement on Calcutta was broken up, and the rioters spread over the country, invading the villages, and carrying alarming rumours of murder and reprisals at the hands of the *sahib-log*.

But the main danger to Calcutta was to come. The armed mill hands slipped down or up the river in boats, according to the location of their mills. They were aided by the floating population of Calcutta and its neighbourhood, consisting of thousands of boatmen and fishermen, and landed in small parties along the extensive river front of Calcutta.

Evading the river patrol and stealing into the city, they were guided to the northern squares surrounding the University—the natural habitat of sedition,—and were concealed in houses and compounds. Concealment was easy in default of a house-to-house search by the British authorities ; and that was out of the question in the meantime.

The arrival of these reinforcements put heart into the local conspirators. Armed gangs of so-called 'National Volunteers' paraded the streets of the northern town. These disappeared into side lanes when troops were seen, but emerged as soon as they had passed, and gradually made their way into the European quarter. Here every man was armed and in uniform, but isolated Europeans were attacked and slain.

Nor were English and Anglo-Indian people the only sufferers. Loot was as impelling a motive with the seditionists as racial hatred. Well-to-do Bengalis were attacked, insulted, robbed, and murdered. General Stewart's curfew order had cleared the streets at night. They now wore a deserted appearance during the day. Guerilla warfare began. General Stewart sent out small armed parties, some of them in armoured cars, to hunt down the bandits. He offered the hospitality of the Fort to all citizens who cared to avail themselves of it ; and hundreds —nay, thousands—of Bengalis, flocked under the protection of its walls.

IV.

The University Volunteer Corps were paraded. There were two battalions of them, each about five hundred strong. They consisted of Bengali University students, whose physique was not great on the average, but who were smart and keen. They represented the best element in the local colleges

and the University. The 'National Volunteers,' as a rule, were idle students, the sons of poverty-stricken parents.

The commandant of the senior University battalion was Robert Dennison, a professor in the Presidency College, a keen volunteer and a popular educationist. The commandant of the junior body was Surendranath Mullick, a well-known chemist who had passed through the University, and had been trained in the O.T.C. in England. Of the other officers only one was an Englishman; the rest were all Bengalis.

Colonel Dennison inspected the two corps, and then addressed them.

"Gentlemen of the University," he said, "you know that a Provisional Government is in being, and that martial law has been proclaimed. You know, too, that several thousand cut-throats are at large in Calcutta, robbing your fathers, murdering your brothers, and threatening the honour of your wives and sisters. The Provisional Government has already disarmed two regiments in the Fort, and was asked to disarm you. It has refused to do so. The time has come when *bhadra-log* (gentlefolk) must stand together—the *bhadra-log* of England and the *bhadra-log* of Bengal. Hitherto you have played at being soldiers. Now there is serious work to be done. The so-called National Volunteers, who have sneered at your military keenness and cast slurs upon your discipline, have at last come into the open with arms in their hands, and have challenged you to a trial of strength. The reply of the Government is to arm you and send you forth to do battle for the cause of law and order. It trusts you entirely, and is confident that you will justify that trust. Gentlemen of the University Corps, three cheers for the King-Emperor!"

He doffed his helmet and led with a "Hip-hip-

hurrah!" It was a flamboyant speech, but Dennison knew his men—the generous impulsive youth of upper-class Bengal,—and appealed to them in a manner to which they had no choice but to respond. He had reminded them that they were gentlemen, and had been made fun of by the riff-raff calling itself the National Volunteers. Their cheers rang out, and Dennison knew that the University battalions were won.

They were now divided into small parties, and sent off to round up the 'National Volunteers' and the mill hands. This proved an inspiration. The University Corps knew all about the bolt-holes of sedition, and the marauding gangs could not get away from them as they could from the European detachments and the armoured cars. Dozens of hand-to-hand fights took place in the streets and alleys, in which victory generally rested on the side of the University Corps, young, energetic, with expert knowledge of the locality, and keyed up to a high pitch of loyalty and enthusiasm. They suffered losses, but they gave more than they got, and in two or three days they had made such an impression on the armed gangs that these began to quit Calcutta. This was unfortunate for the villages round about, but it helped greatly to restore the *morale* of the capital.

V.

Hardy, quick to appreciate the notable success of the mobilisation of the University Corps, had them paraded on Saturday morning on the maidan south of Government House, and himself inspected and addressed them. It was the first time he had stirred outside the grounds of the official residence. The two battalions looked a little weary, and their ranks were somewhat thinned; they had been up all night, chasing the gangs, and shooting at sight. But they were full of energy; and when Colonel

Dennison called for three cheers for the President, they responded with wild enthusiasm. Hardy saluted genially, and rode from the field.

As he returned to his Cabinet, Clough handed him two messages which had been received during his brief absence.

One was a wireless originally addressed to General Stewart as General Officer commanding the Presidency. The General had forwarded it at once to the Government. It was dated Bareilly, and was from the Brigade Major to the General commanding at Lucknow :—

> " Indian troops at Delhi mutinied yesterday," it ran. " Government of India wiped out. British garrison, and all Europeans in Raisina and cantonments massacred. Aerodrome and 150 planes destroyed. Mutiny spread Meerut, Lucknow, Cawnpore. British garrison overwhelmed most places. Lucknow fallen. Generals Wade and Cavanagh killed. Warn Calcutta."

The other was dated Whitehall, 8th November :—

> " To Provisional Government. Release Sir James Bowles instantly, and notify me that this has been done. Send full account your proceedings together with any explanation you may have to offer. Resign your unlawful functions, and place yourselves at disposal of Viceroy, who has been instructed by cable to return immediately from Burma. DERWENT, Secretary of State."

Hardy dropped the second message, and reperused the first despatch with a grave face.

" So it has come," he said, " and it has caught them unprepared. Well, gentlemen, we can at least claim to have saved Calcutta."

PART II.

CHAPTER TWELVE.

I.

In 1957 the Government of India—that is to say, the clerks and the other underlings of its various departments—moved, as usual, from Simla to Delhi at the beginning of November. For nearly a century this semi-annual flitting had gone on—from the hills of Simla to the plains of Delhi in the cold weather, from Delhi to Simla when the hot winds of March and April began to blow.

The clerks and underlings went straight from their desks at Simla to their desks at Delhi. Their superiors—that is to say, the Viceroy, the members of the Government of India, and the chief secretaries —were more fortunate. They spent several weeks on tour; which means that they visited different parts of India in turn, nominally to inspect the work of various departments, actually to have a good time at the public expense.

They were so engaged at the beginning of November 1957; scattered to the four corners of the subcontinent—an ideal arrangement from the viewpoint of those who were plotting the downfall of British rule. An incidental reason why the leading conspirators should now be forgathering in Delhi.

In spite of repeated attempts to Indianise the services, there were still a few English and Anglo-Indians among the subordinate officials. They were hopelessly outnumbered, but it had been found impossible to do without them altogether.

In this fateful year the subordinates came down as usual from the hills, looking rosy and robust by comparison with the pale faces of those who had spent the hot weather on the plains. But, healthy

as they looked, they were filled with a vague uneasiness. The bazaar in Simla had been full of sinister rumours of an outbreak planned to take place at Delhi before Christmas. The servants carried these reports back to their masters, asking them if it were true that all the *sahib-log* were to be murdered, and that every peasant was to become as rich as a *bunnia* (money-lender).

The masters had laughed at them, but had afterwards looked grave enough. It was still the fateful year 1957—just a century after that other fateful year of which the tradition still persisted. True, the hot weather had passed, and no rising had taken place. The Ides of March had come—aye, Cæsar, but not gone!

Two days before the move to Delhi an old man with a long white beard had come to see Roland Knyvett, sub-registrar in the Home Department. Rahim Bux was over eighty, and had been orderly to Knyvett's father—in his time also a Government servant—for thirty-five years. The old man belonged to the school of faithful retainers which still exists in India—men who are ready to follow their masters to the death. Having served the father, Rahim Bux still considered himself as bound to the son; only age and infirmity prevented him from serving him in the same capacity. But he still felt it his duty to watch over him.

"Protector of the Poor," he had said to Roland Knyvett, after the usual greetings and the usual inquiries on both sides, "is it necessary that the huzoor should go down to Delhi this year?"

"Yes, Rahim Bux, I'm afraid it is," Knyvett had replied.

"Huzoor," said the old man earnestly, "go not to Delhi this year. Take leave and go to Belait, or remain in Simla, but do not take the memsahib and the baba to Delhi."

"Why not this year?"

"Huzoor, there is villainy afoot. The Hindus, children of pigs, are plotting to rise against the Sirkar, and I fear me my own brethren, or some of them, may join in the rebellion. There will be great bloodshed, sahib, and rape and looting. Huzoor, more blood will be shed than ever flowed in the great Mutiny."

"Impossible, Rahim Bux. No conspiracy can possibly succeed against us. Even if the railways were in rebel hands we have road and air transport and wireless, and can concentrate troops at any point within a few hours. Who has told you this?"

"Huzoor, who tells it not? It is in everybody's mouth, and the *chupatti* has been going round."

"Are you sure of that?"

"These eyes have seen it, sahib. Be warned, and go not down to Delhi."

"But, Rahim Bux, I must go. My duty lies there. And where I go I am afraid my wife and child must come. I would gladly leave them in Simla, but they would not stay."

Whereat Rahim Bux had salaamed very solemnly. "It is *Kismet*, huzoor. What is written will be. I can say no more."

When he had gone Knyvett sat thoughtful for a time. He was a fine specimen of the 'country-born' Englishman—florid, tall, and burly. He was of purely English extraction, although he had been born and brought up in India. He had once visited England, where he had met and married Margaret Wood, a pretty teacher in an elementary school in Birmingham. There was one child, a beautiful boy of three.

The warnings given him by Rahim Bux hit him all the harder because of the effect of the Simla rumours on his wife's health and happiness. Mrs Knyvett, a pleasing blonde with a sunny and affec-

tionate disposition, had for some time been completely unlike herself. The prospect of moving to Delhi had made her nervous, suspicious, almost fretful, pursued by a vague fear. She would not let the fair-haired 'Bubbles,' with his laughing eyes and his rosebud of a mouth, out of her sight. She started at any unusual sound. She asked her husband repeatedly if Delhi was safe. She almost resented the big good-looking man's cheery assurance that it was.

Knyvett had pooh-poohed the rumours, but eventually, at his wife's urgency, had mentioned them to one of the Under-Secretaries, and asked him whether the Government was aware that these things were being said.

The Under-Secretary, an Oxford intellectual, had treated the inquiry superciliously.

"My dear Knyvett," he said, "do you think the Government concerns itself with whispers of that sort? I have heard one or two rumours, and so, I expect, has the Honourable Member. But, of course, we shall take no notice of them. It is the only way."

Reassured by this assumption of confidence, Knyvett had spoken cheerfully to his wife, but she refused to be comforted.

"I wish 'Bubbles' and I could have gone home with some of the others," she said.

"I wish you could," replied Knyvett simply.

She flung her arms round his neck. "And leave you here, my dearest? No, I couldn't have done that. But I do wish we could all have gone together!"

How many thousands of times has that wish been expressed by husbands, or wives, or both, in India!

II.

So the Knyvetts had moved down to Delhi with the other subordinate officials on the 1st of November; and on the 6th Knyvett went to his work as usual.

The Secretariat and the bungalows of the subordinate officials were both situated in the spacious suburb of Raisina, or New Delhi, which was a considerable distance from the city of Old Delhi, "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife."

In the ordinary way few echoes of the city's happenings reached the cloistered seclusion of the Government offices. But that day—it was the day after Hardy's *coup d'état* in far Calcutta—a wave of unrest swept over city and suburbs. The wildest rumours went about. The Calcutta populace had risen, and had been joined by three mutinous regiments. The Governor of Bengal had been killed. There had been colossal loss of European life, and a native Governor had been proclaimed. The victorious Indian forces had already started from Calcutta, some of them by air, and these would be in Delhi next day. Knyvett had the questionable satisfaction of noting a change in the attitude of the supercilious Under-Secretary. In fact he was alarmed, and drafted telegraphic inquiries to Calcutta every hour.

There was a subtle difference in the demeanour of the *chuprassis* and the other menials. The Indian is able to express hatred or contempt in such a way that there is nothing to take hold of, but the effect is unmistakable. The servants told their masters, without uttering a word or making a gesture, that they regarded their régime as over. Instead of passing the greater part of the day in sleep, they huddled together in little knots, and

were often so engrossed in discussing the latest rumour that the official call-bell went unheeded. Then, when an irate official appeared and demanded the reason, his reception was apt to be very different from the hurrying obsequiousness which would have greeted him only yesterday. There were scowls, yawns, and perfunctory compliance.

The supercilious Under-Secretary grew more and more upset. He decoded the messages from Calcutta himself, and kept their purport a secret from Knyvett—which was absurd when they were decoded by traitors in the Telegraph Department, and their contents given out to the last people to whom the Under-Secretary would have dreamed of imparting them.

Once Knyvett caught the name of Bijli Rao of Pindarinagar, and the sound made his heart stand still. The Maharaja of Pindarinagar was a leading Mahratta prince whose loyalty had long been suspect. He was immensely wealthy, and much of his wealth was supposed to have gone to finance discontent and corrupt the Army. Had he been emboldened by the news from Calcutta? If this cunning conspirator was coming out into the open, the situation must be serious indeed.

Knyvett returned to his home in the evening, his heart heavy with forebodings. It was one of a line of pretty bungalows, specially built for the subordinate officials, and had a small compound, or garden. The garden was still green after the recent rains, and the beds were filled with young seedlings which promised to be gay with flowers in the spring.

His wife was waiting to greet him. His little son sat astride of her shoulder, and a pang of love and fear went through him at the sight of them. What was in store for them all?

'Bubbles' held out his hands to his father. Swung

from one parent to the other he had his evening's romp until, tired and happy, he was packed off to bed.

When he was asleep Margaret Knyvett came back to her husband.

"What has happened?" she asked. One glance at his face as he returned had confirmed her fears.

Knyvett told her all he knew—and that was vague, though alarming.

"There has been trouble in Calcutta," he answered. "Exactly what has happened I don't know, but there has been bloodshed, and the Government has had some sort of an upset. The people here are excited, and there are rumours of an intended rising in Delhi. Peggy, I want you and 'Bubbles' to get away to-morrow."

"And leave you here?"

"Of course. I couldn't get leave even if I asked for it—and I wouldn't ask. My place is here, and if there is a risk it is in the day's work. But things are getting serious, and I want you and the boy to be safe."

"But where can we go, Roly?"

"Back to Simla, I think, dear. You can take the ayah and the bearer to look after you, and I will make shift with Kasim."

III.

Their evening meal over, Knyvett went to the railway station to book accommodation in the morning train for Simla. He had to walk nearly a mile to do so, for they possessed no private conveyance. What he saw on the road to the station indicated that the situation had grown worse. He passed numerous groups of Indians. Not one of them attempted to make way for him, and some of them jostled him deliberately, passing on amid

shouts and laughter. He also met several Sikhs, each with his formidable *kirpan* (short sword) bared as if for immediate use. The roads, generally deserted at this time, seemed alive with people.

Knyvett had intended to book accommodation on the Delhi-Simla express, but, influenced by these omens, he went instead to the aerodrome. A train might be derailed, a bus might be held up and overturned, but a plane once up in the air had a better chance of getting away safely.

Every plane at the disposal of the three private companies he approached had been reserved for the first two or three trips next day. Evidently the idea of flying to Simla had struck other people besides himself! He secured an 'option' on one for three o'clock in the afternoon.

Then he went to the railway station. He found the booking office besieged by a small crowd of English and Anglo-Indian subordinates, all anxious, if not panic-stricken, and all eager to escape from Delhi. Some wished to go to Bombay, others to Calcutta, and a few, like himself, had Simla in their mind's eye.

The European stationmaster was far from encouraging to any of them.

"I am afraid there is trouble on the main lines," he said. "There have been strikes at Kalka, Manmad, and Naini. All the trains are many hours late, and some of them probably will not arrive at all."

"Is there any further news from Calcutta?" asked Knyvett.

"Yes, there has been a revolution, but this time it is a white rising. The British community has turned on the Government and deposed Sir James Bowles. There is a Provisional Government, and some serious fighting has taken place."

"That should make the people here more careful," observed a man at Knyvett's elbow.

"Do you mean the Indian Government or the disloyalists?" asked the stationmaster. "If you mean the seditionists, I doubt it. More likely to stir them up, I should say."

"In the meantime," asked Knyvett, "is it any use booking seats to-night?"

"Quite useless, sir. If you are keen to get away, the best plan would be to come and camp in the station; and I don't recommend that as a comfortable night's lodging."

Knyvett turned away, sick with apprehension. That serious trouble was brewing there could be no manner of doubt; and here were he and his family—and dozens of other families—caught like rats in a trap, in the most ominous and dangerous centre in India, and unable to get out. Rahim Bux's warning, then, was justified; but the atmosphere of Simla has a curious influence upon officialdom. The place itself is so remote from the heat and turmoil of the plains that it is difficult to realise that there is an India which toils and sweats and plots and effervesces nearly eight thousand feet below.

The rumours he had heard in Simla also rushed back into his mind. There was every reason now to believe them, but they no longer related to an India far away. The discontented soldiery was here, in Delhi, less than half a dozen miles off, and should they mutiny the people who could not get away would be at their mercy. Especially as the Government of India, obeying its Whitehall taskmasters, had practically disarmed all Europeans, including those in its own employ.

He shrank from the thought of the deplorable weakness of the British garrison at Delhi—one battalion, two batteries, half a dozen tanks, and a

single cavalry regiment. The annual manœuvres, which would have brought something like a division of British troops to Delhi, had been abandoned; but there were over four native battalions, two native brigades of artillery, and three mounted regiments in addition to a small army of Imperial Service troops, brought up by disloyal princes under false pretences, as he now saw in a flash.

One asset he had forgotten for the moment, but that was the most important of all. The Royal Air Force, with its headquarters at Risalpur, had hundreds of perfectly equipped machines, including fast bombing planes that would make mincemeat of the rebels in no time if they were once in the air. There were a hundred or so in Delhi. Would they have a chance of getting up? The plotters would be bound to think of that.

His heart heavier than ever, Knyvett returned to his bungalow. He and his wife had little comfort to give each other, but they talked until late, each feeling that it might be their last chance for a long time—if they ever had another! They packed in readiness for the morrow's flitting, and then slept in each other's arms.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

I.

If Raisina was restless through fear, the city of Delhi, enclosed within its red sandstone walls, was agog with excitement. In Delhi even more than in Raisina the rumours set afloat by the rising in Calcutta flew from mouth to mouth until the few facts which had filtered through were distorted beyond recognition. The Viceroy had been drowned on his way to Burmah. The Governor of Bengal had been first deposed and then murdered. A republic had been proclaimed in Calcutta. The Indian troops had mutinied, and had driven the British volunteers, headed by Hardy, into the sea. Many people in Delhi—and these by no means the most ignorant—did not know that Calcutta was ninety miles from the sea. And so on. The air was electric. Work became impossible. Anything, it was felt, might happen.

Lieutenant-Colonel Rash Bihari Das, R.E. (retired), had lived for some weeks in a street in Delhi within easy reach of the Chandni Chowk—the Street of Silversmiths,—that famous thoroughfare which looks like a picture from the 'Arabian Nights.' He lived unobtrusively, engrossed in the writing of his 'History of Delhi.' The police took little notice of him. They were not encouraged by the present Government to take notice of any person who had retired from the service with a grievance against the military authorities. Nevertheless, in earlier days they would have been fully alive to the fact that Colonel Das had quitted the Army in a rage against the injustice which had been done him, and as a protest against his exclusion from the post of Colonel on the Staff.

His grievance was a genuine one. He was a Bengali engineer who had passed out of Woolwich at the head of the list some twenty-five years before. He was a supremely able man, who might easily have been a General in the British Army, but had been passed over, partly because of his race, and partly owing to the general tendency of Army heads to ignore the right man for a post and appoint the wrong one.

But Rash Bihari was a man from Eastern Bengal, where people never forget or forgive an injury, and where violent acts of revenge are almost as common as they are on the North-West Frontier. He sent in his papers on learning that he had been superseded, and retired into private life, bearing a bitter grudge against the Government. In this mood he had been discovered by Bijli Rao, Maharaja of Pindarinagar.

The Maharaja of Pindarinagar was a scheming Mahratta prince who had long cherished hopes of some day overthrowing British power. The timid and nerveless policy which had been followed by Whitehall and Delhi for years had reduced the fear of the British name to vanishing point, and had encouraged him to formulate definite plans. In Rash Bihari he had found a brilliant confederate. The Bengali engineer was a profound student of war. The Army Department had made one of its worst blunders when it converted him into an enemy.

Maharaja Sir Bijli Rao (literally the 'Lightning Prince') had instantly recognised Rash Bihari's gifts as an organiser, and had secretly taken him into his service. The Bengali engineer now found himself with ample funds at his disposal, and had worked out elaborate plans for a mutiny and rebellion combined, which should involve all classes and races, civilians as well as soldiers.

These plans were known to hundreds, or rather thousands, and were the basis of rumours which had found their way to the farthest corners of India. The Government had heard of them, but, under dictation from Whitehall, had deliberately ignored them. As for their author, no one suspected the retired engineer colonel of being anything but a bookworm and a scholar.

II.

Six o'clock in the morning of 6th November found Colonel Rash Bihari Das sitting down to his early morning cup of tea, one of many English habits he had acquired in the Army. As he sat there in pyjamas, a plump and well-groomed figure of a man of forty-seven, there was something strongly Napoleonic about him, both as to face and figure. In point of fact, he had Napoleonic ambitions. He was not altogether without visions of himself as Dictator of India, but he knew that these ambitions must wait. In the meantime he was content to be the brains of the conspiracy, and to let his dangerous employer, Bijli Rao, and the pompous Musulman noble, Prince Mahomed Tughlak of Fatehbad, appear to direct its councils. He knew full well the disadvantage of being a 'Bangal' (Eastern Bengali). He knew the hatred and contempt felt for the people of the Lower Gangetic plain by everyone from Northern or Western India. He was well aware that the conspirators were capable of making the utmost use of his military and engineering talents, and then flinging him aside—if he allowed them. But he had no intention of permitting them to do so.

Everything was now ready for the overwhelming blow which was to be delivered on 14th November. As he sipped his tea Rash Bihari Das smiled to think of the surprise which he hoped to give his

employers, once the hated British were out of the way.

The door of his bedroom was suddenly opened and a young man—a Bengali—rushed in. Romesh Bhaduri, who was his confidential secretary and fellow-conspirator, was a graduate of Calcutta and Benares. He had learned all about explosives, both political and pyrotechnic, at the latter University. He was dishevelled and wildly excited.

"Wireless from Suresh in Calcutta!" he exclaimed in English. "I have just decoded it."

Without further preliminaries he read as follows from the paper in his hands :—

> "Urgent. Hardy and European group deposed Bowles midnight last night, and appointed themselves Provisional Government. Martial law proclaimed. Arrest of our leaders attempted, but they have escaped and are flying to Delhi. Calcutta patrolled Hardy's troops. Our movement paralysed."

"The devil!" said Rash Bihari, paling. "Are you sure you have decoded it correctly?"

"I have checked it twice," was the reply. "But read the Morse for yourself if you doubt me."

"No, Romesh, I am sure you have got it right. But this is damned awkward. Telephone to the Maharaja that I am coming to see him at once, and summon the Council to meet us at eight o'clock at the Palace. Get the car out now."

In fifteen minutes Colonel Rash Bihari Das, clean shaven and neatly attired, entered his car and was driven at a furious pace to the residence of Maharaja Sir Bijli Rao of Pindarinagar in Raisina, or New Delhi. The Pindarinagar Palace was one of the princely private houses which lay, as it were, under the shadow of Government House, like planets

depending on the sun for light and heat. It was spacious and comfortable, with a profusion of frills and cupolas, but otherwise like any other very large villa. Moreover, it had an air of having been lived in. Bijli Rao often spent several months on end in Delhi.

Rash Bihari was admitted at once to the Maharaja's private apartments. He found his master dressed in silk pyjamas and an elaborate dressing-gown, and not in the best of tempers.

Sir Bijli Rao, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Maharaja of Pindarinagar, was a short thick-set man of fifty. His black hair was untouched with grey, his figure expressed strength and virility, and this impression was borne out by his bright alert eyes, his straight thick nose, his grim mouth shaded by a clipped moustache, and his square and resolute chin. It was not altogether a bad face. There were humorous creases about the eyes and mouth, and it was possible to imagine him as visited by spasms of kindness. His political activities, which were now being put forth for gigantic stakes, had given him a ruthless look ; but if he had not been a prince, if he had not been a Mahratta, if he had not been so rich or ambitious—in short, if he had not been most of the things that he actually was,—he would have been a good man and an honest ruler.

His State was one of the largest, wealthiest, and best-governed in India, and he had long held a commanding position in the Chamber of Princes. He had been everywhere, and had done everything. Nevertheless, he had lain under the ban of the Indian Foreign Office for several years. His loyalty was suspect, and with reason ; but his disaffection had gone far further than the Foreign Office knew. Like the Sultan of Jehanabad, he had been antagonised by the interferences of the Government of India in the inner working of his State. He

considered that his treaty rights had been invaded, and, being a Mahratta, had cast about for means of actively avenging the injury.

These seemed to lie close to hand in the weakness and growing demoralisation of the Government in the face of the incessant agitation which was being kept up in British India. Communism, and the spurious nationalism which had grown up during the past half-century, were obviously sapping the foundations of British power. He saw, or thought he saw, the British Raj breaking up as his ancestors had watched the decay of the Mogul Empire. Here, surely, was an opportunity, not only of wreaking his personal grudge upon the British, but of setting up an independent kingdom when the grand catastrophe arrived. His ambitions carried him still further. Why should not the dream of a Mahratta Empire be realised in his person ?

This idea once conceived grew stronger and clearer. In time he came to regard himself as a man of destiny. His practical Mahratta genius turned to means of accomplishing his double purpose. He sounded other discontented princes, and in most of them found willing listeners.

This was the origin of the conspiracy which had now come almost to a head. Bijli Rao's enormous wealth was devoted partly to organising the independent princes, and partly to corrupting the native Army. In Rash Bihari Das he had discovered an organising genius of which he was quick to avail himself, while keeping the Bengali resolutely in his place.

III.

The Maharaja was seated in his sumptuous study at an enormous writing-table. He was smoking, and glancing at the public wireless news, which had come in overnight and had been typed by his

private operator. He looked up with a frown as Rash Bihari entered and bowed.

"Well," he said, "what has gone wrong now?"

He spoke in English, without any trace of an accent.

Rash Bihari handed him the decoded message. He stared at it for half a minute after he had read it, and then looked up with a grim smile.

"It looks like check to the king in Bengal, Rash Bihari. The quickest parry and return on record. Have you seen the general wireless? This explains it."

He passed over the sheaf of wireless news which he had been reading.

A paragraph in it set forth that the Bengal Legislative Council and Senate had passed a resolution the previous afternoon demanding that the military activities of the Europeans in Calcutta should cease; and adding that the Government was about to give effect to the resolution.

"Hardy seems to have struck while Bowles was getting ready to give effect to the resolution," chuckled the Maharaja. "That is the kind of man I like. I wish we had someone of that stamp on our side."

A sly dig at Rash Bihari, who was by no means rash by nature; the 'Lightning Prince' himself was strongly so inclined.

In response to a sign from his employer, the Bengali Colonel sat down and laid the sheaf of wireless on the writing-table.

"Your Highness is doubtless right," he said. "We knew that the Governor of Bengal was going to take this step, but I confess I never foresaw that Hardy and his confederates would kick over the traces."

"Well, now that it has happened," said His

Highness, " what do you make of it—and how does it affect our plans ? "

" It affects them vitally, Maharaja Sahib. In the first place it means that the shock of the initiative has passed from us to the English."

" Pooh ! How can a white mutiny in Calcutta affect the capture of Delhi ? The English are welcome to Calcutta—in the meantime. I always hated the place."

" This is going to wake up the Governments in both countries," pursued Rash Bihari, speaking his thoughts aloud. " Just as we had lulled them so beautifully to sleep."

" They will wake up, as usual, too late," insisted Bijli Rao. " In another week the British garrisons will have been annihilated, and Northern India will be in our hands. We shall hold Delhi and the western seaports, and the air port into the bargain. Bokharistan will keep off their air fleet, and we shall ourselves deal with any attempt at reinforcement by sea."

" All that is possible," Rash Bihari admitted, " on one condition."

" And that is—— ? "

" That the British in Calcutta have not got hold of our plans, and are preparing to counter."

" What has put that thought into your head ? "

" Well, Your Highness will remember that Harish Chunder walked into the lion's den at Jehanabad, a week ago, and was arrested ? "

" Yes, I remember it well enough. You think he may have split ? "

" Jehanabad himself tried him, and sentenced him to death."

" I would have done the same thing myself. But if he is executed, how can he give us away ? "

" He hasn't been shot yet. That is what is troub-

ling me. If he—or anyone else, for that matter—has given our plans away, this rising in Calcutta may mean that the English get in their blow first."

"How on earth can that happen?"

"Very easily. Our date is eight days hence. In a week small reinforcements could be sent out by air from England. A British brigade or even a division might be thrown into Delhi. The aerodromes might be put under special guard. The Government might come together again from the four corners of India. You will admit that if all, or any of these things should happen, our project would wear a very different look. If we struck at the present moment, nothing on earth could save Delhi for the British—and with the shock of the fall of Delhi the greater part of Northern India would fall into our hands."

"Very good," commented the 'Lightning Prince.' "Then the obvious course is to strike now."

This was logic. The Bengali admitted it, but the directness of the Mahratta appalled him.

"There is another alternative, Maharaja Sahib," he said smoothly. "We can call off the rising and await developments."

"And miss the golden opportunity of getting possession of Delhi which these fools are giving us?" queried Bijli Rao. "Never, Rash Bihari. There are not a dozen leading officials in the place. There are hardly any British troops. I tell you I will seize Delhi with my own contingent, and hold it against all comers until the whole of Northern and Western India rises against the British."

"It is more than probable that Your Highness could," assented Rash Bihari; "but I still maintain that there is an alternative. If the British do not know of our plans, this Calcutta rising will mean

that they will fight among themselves. While they are so engaged we can either carry out our original project, or wait until one or other side is exhausted —and then attack one, or both."

"A very pretty theory," answered Bijli Rao, "but the fact remains that at the present moment we have our hands on the throat of the Government of India in Delhi. I am not going to throw away that advantage on any account. I agree with you that a week hence our prospects may be very different if we sit still while the British Government reacts to the shock of Hardy's rebellion. Therefore, we mustn't wait for a week. We must strike to-morrow."

Rash Bihari was silent. It was difficult to maintain that the Maharaja was not right. They had gone too far for delay or retreat. Even if they had not, he knew the fierce Mahratta too well to hope that he would let slip so rare an opportunity. But, now that the moment for action had come, he was conscious of strong misgivings.

His reflections were interrupted.

"I take it," said Bijli Rao, "that everything is ready, and that all that need be done is to give the signal?"

"Yes, Your Highness, every detail is complete—except Bokharistan."

"That, of course. We may have to do without their air fleet at first. But if your arrangements work out at Delhi, Risalpur, and Allahabad, the British will be left practically without an air arm next week. And once Bokharistan moves, we shall be in a position to overwhelm them."

Rash Bihari looked at the clock.

"I have taken the liberty to summon the Council for eight o'clock," he said.

"Quite right," replied the Maharaja, glancing upwards. "I will be ready in twenty minutes.

In the meantime draft the message. First, stand by. Then, to-morrow instead of next week."

He passed into his dressing-room, leaving his chief organiser a prey to growing uneasiness.

IV.

The rebel Council duly met at eight o'clock. It consisted, firstly, of Prince Mahomed Tughlak of Fatehbad, a descendant of the once formidable Tughlak dynasty—a large fat man, one-eyed and sinister-looking, but in reality a dullard and a figure-head. These were the qualities which Bijli Rao valued mostly in him; but he had others, which emerged as the conspiracy developed. He had been drawn into the movement in order to steady the Mohammedan element.

The other two members of the Council were Sirdar Seraj-ud-dowlah and General Chittoo Bhunj Rao. Seraj-ud-dowlah was the nominal Chief of the Staff. General Chittoo, a Mahratta, was called Commander-in-Chief, but was, from first to last, the tool, nominee, and the devoted henchman of Bijli Rao, his native chief.

Both men were ex-cavalrymen in the Indian Army: both had seen much service in frontier wars. Both were soldiers first and humanitarians afterwards. They were in fact ruthless fighters, who had been selected because they stuck at nothing. They were the spearhead of Bijli Rao's policy, even as Rash Bihari was the brain of it. Seraj-ud-dowlah, like Prince Mahomed Tughlak, was there in order to keep the Mohammedans quiet.

There were Rajput princes in the conspiracy, but they were for the most part so insignificant that it had not been thought necessary to give them a representative on the Council. Generally speaking, the rebellion was being engineered by Mohammedans and Mahrattas.

The Council meeting did not last long. Bijli Rao and Rash Bihari had, as usual, everything cut and dry, and all the other conspirators had to do was to approve their arrangements. Prince Mahomed Tughlak was startled by the announcement that the blow must be struck next day instead of next week, but was easily persuaded to agree. The two soldiers were delighted. They had chafed under the delay in getting to grips with the English. The struggle could not begin too soon for them.

All that was necessary was a wireless message to the various centres—Lahore, Lucknow, Allahabad, &c. By noon that day every man in the disaffected garrisons would know that the hour had come, and would be ready to meet it.

The main objectives were the British aerodromes, especially those at Risalpur and Delhi. The plan was essentially the same at both centres. In both of them were two aerodromes—one manned by the Royal Air Force, the other by the Royal Indian Air Force. The respective aerodromes were separated by the whole length of the cantonment. The plan was to destroy the British aerodromes by bombs dropped by the Indian aeroplanes, while Imperial Service contingents—that is to say, troops in the pay of the disloyal princes,—which were encamped in considerable strength at both stations, should enfilade any British troops which might be ordered to the rescue. But there should be little chance of that, for it had also been arranged that the small British garrisons should be attacked in their quarters before dawn.

Both with regard to the Royal Air Force and the artillery arm, the policy of the Government for twenty-five years had made things easy for the rebels. The Royal Indian Artillery Corps was twice as strong as the British armament, and the various service corps were packed with conspirators. Ample

arms and ammunition were at the disposal of the mutineers, while the slackness and inefficiency which had spread like dry-rot through the services had prepared the way for an overwhelming surprise.

For the rest the overpowering of the weak British garrisons at Delhi and the other stations was a mere sum in arithmetic. Thanks to the fatuous policy of Whitehall and Delhi, the big battalions were all on the side of revolt.

The military details having been settled, Rash Bihari brought up a subject to which he attached great importance.

"We have still to consider," he said, "our attitude towards the civilians, European and Eurasian, who fall into our hands."

The 'Lightning Prince' shrugged his shoulders.

"I am perfectly willing," he said, "to hand them over to Prince Mahomed and his co-religionists."

"Your Highness means," Rash Bihari rejoined, "that they should be given the alternatives of embracing Islam—or death?"

"A very fair alternative," answered the Mahratta prince. "It was what they were offered a hundred years ago."

"And they refused — with disastrous consequences," said Rash Bihari. "Your Highness, we must avoid the terrible blunders that were made in 1857. The British are still formidable, and never more so than when they are in desperate straits. I believe the massacre of Cawnpore did more to quell the Mutiny than the relief of Lucknow. If we slaughter the British wholesale we shall invite reprisals—and what about our case before the League of Nations?"

"What do you think, gentlemen?" asked Bijli Rao of the two soldiers.

"As to reprisals," said General Chittoo in his bluntest manner, "we must be prepared for these

in any case if we lose. And if we win, we can snap our fingers at the League of Nations, or any other outside body. Your Highness, I doubt very much whether we can curb our men too much. They are out to finish the English, and they must be allowed more or less to do it in their own way."

"I am inclined to agree with you," said Bijli Rao. "We cannot lay down a hard and fast rule, because to enforce it would mean the shooting of our own men in order to save the lives of the English. That is manifestly absurd. By all means let us avoid unnecessary bloodshed. But—to use the filthy English simile—you cannot have an omelette without breaking a few eggs."

And from the way in which Chittoo and Seraj-ud-dowlah grinned at each other, Rash Bihari drew ominous inferences as to the fate of any British people who might fall into their hands.

v.

The Council broke up, and Bijli Rao and Rash Bihari were again alone together. The Maharaja was unfeignedly cheerful.

"Well, Colonel Sahib," he said, lighting a cigarette, "*jacta est alea*, as Lord Lytton said on a historic occasion."

"Yes, Your Highness," retorted Rash Bihari, "and straightway plunged India into the Second Afghan War."

"By the way," said Bijli Rao, "we must pitch our code message to Bokharistan pretty strongly—point out that the present moment presents such unique advantages for attack that we cannot wait till next week."

"I will certainly pitch it as strongly as I can," was the reply. "It will have to be strong to induce Bokharistan to come in earlier than they agreed to."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

I.

DAWN at Delhi, the centre of India's troubled history for a thousand years—Delhi, the destroyer of dynasties—Delhi, the fatal magnet that has drawn conqueror after conqueror to his doom! This "rose-red city, half as old as time," lay grey and silent at this, the last peaceful dawn which, as a capital city, it was ever to know. Then, minaret after minaret caught up the light, gleamed for a few moments amber and rose, and faded back into the pale greyness which the sun had not yet dissolved. The *Azan*, or call to the faithful to prayer, rang out from the minaret of the great Jumma Musjid, as the muezzin emerged on its balcony. With raised arms he lifted up his silver voice to heaven to proclaim that "God is great" ("*Allah-ho-akbar*").

He repeated this four times, and then proceeded to the declaration "*La ilaha illa 'llah!*" ("There is no God but God!").

"*Ashshadu anna Muhammadan rasul-ullah!*" ("I testify that Mahomet is the Prophet of God!").

"*Allah-ho-akbar! Allah-ho-akbar!*"

Then came a pause, and the wonderful voice went forth again to awaken the sleeping world—

"*As-salatu Khairum 'r Naumi!*" ("Prayer is better than sleep").

And, last of all—

"*La ilaha il-la-'l lahu!*"

In the still morning hours the liquid syllables, "like to a trumpet with a silver sound," were taken up from the lesser mosques, and rang with a militant challenging note over the city, echoing from its rose-red walls until the silent air throbbed with

invocation. As the last melodious strains of the *Azan* died away, leaving a challenge in the air on this morning of mornings, the light grew stronger and clearer, and the city came to life.

II.

At daybreak, Captain Michael Macready, Station Staff Officer of Delhi, was awakened by terrific detonations. Pandemonium seemed to be going on all round him. His bungalow was situated midway between the British and Indian lines, and about a mile from the British aerodrome. He went out on to his verandah, and looked towards the north. He heard more detonations, he heard the drone of aero engines. Looking up, he saw a dozen Indian machines in the air, apparently dropping incendiary bombs on the British aerodrome. These were followed by further explosions, sheets of flame, and columns of smoke.

He now turned his head towards the east, and from the British lines he could hear the crackle of musketry, the stutter of machine-guns, and the deep boom of artillery. Punctuated by these sounds he could hear the savage war-cries of mutinous Indian soldiery mingled with shouts, shrieks, and groans. Did these come from his fellow-countrymen ? He was conscious of an awful conviction that they did.

It had come, then ! The cataclysm against which many people had warned the Government, only to be laughed at for their pains. Macready himself had professed scepticism, but deep down there had been a feeling that all was not well ; that some day the forces of anarchy would be unleashed. And now the crisis had come, and had caught them, as ever, unprepared. He cursed the Government, Army Headquarters, the Northern Command, and

last but not least, himself. He felt vaguely that he was somehow at least partially responsible for the disaster, though how there was no time to consider.

He shouted for his servants, but was not greatly surprised to receive no answer. Whether they were in it or not, they would naturally disappear at such a time. This was unjust to many of them, but again there was no time to argue the point.

In three minutes he was in his uniform, unshaven. A glance at his garage told him that it was open, and that his car had disappeared. He armed himself with revolver, rifle, and bayonet and thirty rounds, and went out into the road. He was determined to kill some rebels before he himself went out. He could not forgive himself or the British Government for his present helplessness. Macready stood six feet four, and had red hair. He was the most powerful man in Delhi that day, and the most desperate.

The next bungalow was a few hundred yards away. It was tenanted by Major French of the Transport, his wife and two children. Macready entered the gate and walked rapidly up to the verandah. This little family had not been deserted by its servants. They were hastily getting together a few belongings and a little food for a journey, while the engine of their car was being raced by their Indian chauffeur.

"Ah, you are getting ready to clear out," was Macready's greeting. "Then there is nothing I can do."

"There's nothing any of us can do," was the almost despairing reply. "The aerodrome is on fire, and the Suffolks and Hussars have been cut up. We are starting in five minutes for Kalka, but God knows whether we shall ever get there."

"Good luck to you all," said Macready. "I am going to try and 'out' a few of these wretches before I go down myself. Good-bye."

He rushed back to the road, and headed directly for the British lines, the crackle of musketry still persisting, and growing clearer as he strode on.

He met several English and Anglo-Indians on the road, fleeing in the opposite direction. They all had the same tale to tell—surprise and massacre in the British lines, an overwhelmed garrison and an undefended cantonment. Women's voices called to him from one or two subordinates' bungalows as he passed. He found them alone with their children, waiting for their men, who had gone out on duty and had not returned. He could only advise them to leave their bungalows at once, and so get a start upon the murderous sepoys, who might soon be expected in pursuit.

Round a turn in the road a car came, driven with reckless fury by a young Tank officer. Two other officers were in the back of the car. There was a shout of mutual recognition and a scream of brakes as the car pulled up fifty yards away. Macready ran back to it.

Then he saw that the two men at the back were badly wounded—one was obviously dying. Their injuries were gaping and undressed. The driver himself was bleeding and dishevelled.

"Want a lift, Macready?" cried Lieutenant Wilson, at the wheel. "Jump in. We can't wait."

"What has happened—and where are you going?" asked the Station Staff Officer.

"The native regiments have risen, and scuppered the lot of us. Tanks out of action—sabotage, of course. We were attacked while trying to start them, and Grimes, Hudson, and I are the only officers left alive—so far. We were lucky enough to jump into this car, and I am rushing these poor devils to Kalka—if I can. You're not coming? Good-bye."

They drove off. Macready was never to see this car-load or the Frenches again.

Gritting his teeth he broke into a run which soon brought him in sight of the British lines. Then he advanced more cautiously, moving from cover to cover. He could see a number of figures prone on the ground—some motionless, others writhing. There were also groups of sepoys, with fixed bayonets, and two machine-guns guarding the approaches to the barrack. Moans and shrieks, mingled with laughter and shouts of victory, filled the air. These were varied by the occasional crack of a rifle. Hiding behind a tree, he saw two British soldiers staggering out of the entrance. Several shots rang out, and they collapsed on the barrack yard.

Macready decided that it was time he began. He would have preferred to kill bigger game, but considered it doubtful whether he would have a chance. He was a marksman, the distance was 300 yards, and he had thirty rounds to his rifle, to say nothing of the bayonet. He had written off his life, but prayed nevertheless to be allowed to sell it dearly.

Kneeling down behind the tree he took the nearest machine gunner and fired. The man dropped without a sound, and Macready got his mate before anyone of them had had time to turn his head. A third fell wounded in as many seconds; and then there was a rush to cover, during which Macready dropped one more before exhausting his clip. By the time he had reloaded the space outside the barrack yard was clear.

He leaned back against the trunk, well satisfied with the way things were going. "Three bulls and an inner out of five rounds isn't bad," he muttered to himself, and waited. He knew that the enemy would presently begin to stalk him; but promised himself that it would cost them several lives more to 'get' him. He saw them

occasionally dodging from one cover to another so as to get behind him. He was also aware that others were wriggling towards him in a more direct line. He held his fire; there was plenty of time.

Presently an Indian—a subadar, he could see, even at that distance—came out of the barrack and shouted an order. Chuckling at the response he was about to meet with, Macready covered him and fired. He crumpled up on the steps. Two sepoys came out to pick him up. Macready dropped one of them immediately; the other darted back inside.

By this time the rifle-firing had practically ceased inside the building. Only groans and cries could be heard. Macready turned, and fired at a sepoy who was running towards a neighbouring tree. He missed him, and swore at himself. The next moment two bullets spat close to him, and entered his tree. He flung himself on his face—a precaution which lessened the chances of his being hit, but prevented him from seeing what was going on around him.

This would not do. He had no mind to be 'rushed' and killed like a cornered rat. He preferred to do the rushing himself. Before flinging himself down, he had noticed a small line of mutineers in open formation, working towards him from the direction of the barrack, and he decided to give them a surprise.

He rose and made for them, whirling his rifle and bayonet round his head, and uttering a wild Irish "Hurroo!" His blue eyes were blazing with fury. His mouth under its red moustache was wide open, and the teeth were clenched and grinning. His face and clothes were grimy with sweat and dust. His red hair looked as though he had dipped his head in blood. He bounded forward with giant strides, carrying his sixteen stone as if it were a featherweight, and unaware

himself of the awesome figure he presented to his enemies.

Half a dozen strides brought him up to the scattered line of the attacking sepoys. Even if they had not been semi-paralysed with fear they scarcely had time to aim and fire at him. With the butt of his rifle he smashed in the upturned face of the man who was nearest him; and then, with a bound, leaped on and bayoneted the next man. Two shots were fired at him, but the aim was wild. He extracted his bayonet swiftly, and disembowelled a third enemy. He was mad with the lust of killing by this time, shrieking and cursing as he withdrew the bayonet. More wild shooting came from a little distance, but the nerves of the men who were nearest to him gave way completely. With shouts of terror they broke cover, and ran in all directions as if the devil himself were after them.

Macready killed a man who was fleeing before him back to the barrack, and then rushed forward to enter it. He wished to strike down a native officer or two before this exciting adventure was finished. Shouts came after him, warning the others that the *Shaitan*—that is to say, the devil—was loose, and further shots were fired. They missed him, and so increased the superstitious horror of the mutineers. He reached the nearest steps and bounded up them, only to find a heavy door slammed suddenly in his face.

Possessed though he was by a blood thirst which felt as though it never could be quenched, he was nevertheless thinking coolly and clearly. He saw that it was not worth while trying to force the door, or to enter the building through a window. That would be to sacrifice his life gratuitously. Macready threw his 'baleful eyes' around him. By the steps was a motor-cycle on its stand—the property,

doubtless, of some unfortunate subaltern. Macready reflected that he had done a certain amount of damage to the enemy, and that if he could get away to do some more elsewhere it might be better than being killed just then.

He seized the machine and straightened the stand, ignoring several bullets which whizzed past him. He gave the pedal a powerful kick, and as he did so he heard a groan from a huddled heap close by.

"For Gawd's sake take me with you," came from a pair of bloodless lips, as a wounded Suffolk raised himself painfully from the ground.

Macready did not hesitate. Here was another reason for quitting. He had 'outed' nearly a dozen rebels, and might possibly save a British life. He swung the wounded man before him on the saddle, gave two more tremendous kicks, and started the engine. The noise drowned alike the agonised groans of the soldier and the sputter of musketry which now came at him both from within and without the barrack. But the shooting was wilder than ever, every mutineer being now convinced that he was a devil and bore a charmed life. He let in the gear and scooted away from the barrack towards the main road leading to Raisina. There was a dying fusillade as he made his getaway, but he was completely unconscious of it. The balancing of a wounded soldier on the crupper of a strange 'bike' occupied his attention to the exclusion of every other thought. It occurred to him how uncomfortable the poor fellow must be, and he felt very sorry for him.

Why he went towards Raisina or New Delhi he hardly knew. Possibly he may have had a confused notion of reporting to the Commander-in-Chief (who had been assassinated in Lahore that morning), or of getting into touch somehow with

the Government which he served. But in any case, as he told himself, it didn't much matter where he went. So far the luck had been with him, but it must turn, sooner or later.

III.

In the meantime Macready's difficulties increased. The wounded man, whose shoulder had been shattered by a machine-gun bullet, fainted, and lay, a limp mass, across the handlebars. Macready, in spite of his great strength, found it difficult to support him and steer the machine at the same time. He passed several refugees flying in the Raisina direction. He drove more slowly, and in ten minutes or so found himself in Raisina and passing Government House. He now looked out for first-aid. Most of the larger houses were untenanted, either because the occupants were on tour or had fled. Turning into the first road he came to, he approached a decent bungalow, where it seemed to him he might hope for help.

Standing under the porch was a cheap six-cylinder closed car, which was evidently on the verge of starting up. In the back seat were two women, one middle-aged and kindly, the other pretty but troubled, and clasping a beautiful boy of three. Two men were putting a few things into the car, the elder slightly dark and stout, the younger a stalwart fellow, tall and blond.

Macready drove his motor-cycle up the short roadway leading from the gate to the house. The little party looked startled as the gigantic Irishman rode in. But the younger man, who was none other than Roland Knyvett, caught hold of the motor-bicycle and steadied it while Macready dismounted and gently laid his human burden upon the porch step, letting him lean against the

pillar. Both men were covered with blood, and the dark and dirty bayonet slung behind Macready's back told another grim story.

Margaret Knyvett's face grew paler than it had been. On being awakened by the noise of the outbreak at dawn they had taken 'Bubbles' and had run round to their neighbours, Mr and Mrs Jones, who had a car and were about to make their escape. The Joneses had willingly agreed to take the little party with them.

The elder lady promptly got out of the car and bent over the wounded man.

"Poor fellow!" she said in a soft voice. "Fred, give me the brandy, and let me have some lint and water to dress his wound."

"It's good ye are, madam," said Macready, feeling as though many years had elapsed since he had spoken to a civilised human being. His mouth was dry and his utterance was thick. "But I think," he went on, pulling himself together, "that the sooner you can get away from here the better. The mutineers are in possession of cantonments, and will soon be in Raisina. I shall be indebted to you if you can take this poor fellow with you, wherever you may be going. The handlebars of a motor-bike are a poor bed for a wounded man. And I have other work to do."

The two men knew who he was. Mr Jones, the husband of the elder lady and the owner of the car, procured water for the two soldiers, and Macready gulped down a long glassful.

"What is the news, sir?" asked Roland Knyvett.

"Faith, it's the worst in the world," Macready answered. "All I know is that the British garrison in cantonments has been all but wiped out, and that this man and I are among the very few survivors."

By this time Mrs Jones was bathing and binding

up the battered shoulder, and the wounded man after being dosed with brandy had recovered sufficiently to groan and writhe under her kindly ministrations.

"I'm afraid you can't do much for him now," said Macready. "But if ye can take him along with you—and if ye do reach a place of safety—maybe the doctors can patch him up again. But I warn ye, ye've no time to lose. The rebels will enter Raisina from two directions—from the cantonments and from the Fort. If you start now you may save this poor lad as well as yourselves. If ye delay much longer, ye can hardly hope to escape."

"Especially," broke in Mr Jones bitterly, "as the Government has disarmed all its European subordinates, and has left us helpless before these wretches."

Macready, who had unslung his rifle and bayonet, patted them affectionately.

"It's sorry I am that I can't give ye these," he said, "but they have done good service this morning, and, please God, I will use them again before the day is out. Now, madam, if you are ready, I will lift the Suffolk man into the car, and place him in your good hands."

He raised the boy in his arms—he was only a boy, and looked as delicate as a woman—and placed him tenderly in the arms of the two ladies. His head lay on Mrs Jones' motherly bosom, and his feet on Margaret Knyvett's lap. 'Bubbles' was taken by his father as the two men climbed into the driving seat. The Jones' faithful bearer crouched on the running-board, and held on by the door. The carrier supported two boxes, one containing food and drink, and the other a few clothes, towels, &c., hastily thrown into it.

Mr Jones, almost on the point of pressing the starter, recollected himself and turned to Macready.

" Won't you come with us, captain ? " he asked. " We can take you up somehow."

Macready shook his head. " Thank ye, my friend," he replied, " but my place is here, and here I must stay. But a prosperous journey to you, ladies, and may we meet again before we get to heaven. Where do you go now ? "

" We will try and get to Agra," answered Mr Jones. " It stood through the last Mutiny, and it seems as safe as any other place. Good-bye to you, captain, and good luck."

He pressed the starter and let in the clutch. As the car moved forward Mrs Jones called excitedly to her husband to stop.

" Captain Macready," she inquired, " have you had anything to eat ? "

" Nothing as yet," he replied with a smile, " but I am going to rifle your larder before the mutineers can reach it."

" I was going to ask you to do it," she said. " There is plenty of food, and—oh, captain, God bless you for a brave man."

Macready saluted as the car slid sway. He then went into the deserted house. There was plenty to eat, as Mrs Jones had said, and he made a hearty meal. Then, feeling literally like a giant refreshed, he proceeded to lay out his second plan of campaign. The first, he felt, had been crude and unscientific, and he was lucky to have got off as lightly as he had done. But a second scheme had come to him, even while he was talking to the Jones-Knyvett party. It was indeed no less dangerous or even foolhardy than his first wild gesture of defiance and revenge ; but it called for greater skill, and it might conceivably have more important results.

His first need was for something to stain his skin. He was fortunate enough to discover some permanganate of potash after a short tour of the house.

In a few minutes he had effected a transformation ; he told himself that his own mother would not have known him. With his darkened hair and skin he looked very much like an Afghan. Then he discarded his smart leather gaiters, and tore every badge and distinguishing mark from his uniform. He now looked like an out-at-elbows Indian officer after a night spent in the bazaar. But he must have a *puggaree* (native head-dress) and puttees, and these must be acquired as spoils of war.

His prediction as to the speedy arrival of the mutineers was fulfilled. In less than an hour groups of them began to come into Raisina, both from cantonments and from the city. Most of them were drunk, some with liquor, others with blood. They had killed every English man or woman they had seen, and were now busy looting the European houses. Peering out, Macready could see them bursting into neighbouring bungalows, and emerging from them laden with spoil. Shrieks were also heard, as though they had surprised some unfortunate Europeans in hiding, and were butchering them. The sound almost made Macready see red again, but he controlled himself and waited.

He was rewarded at last. Two sepoys turned aside to loot the Jones' bungalow. They entered the house together, but then they separated, one going into the drawing-room, the other into the dining-room, on the opposite side of the little hall, where Macready awaited him behind the door.

As he entered, he was transfixed by the Irishman's bayonet, and the one sobbing cry which he would have uttered was choked by a huge hand gripping his throat.

Macready extracted his bayonet and walked into the hall. The other mutineer, a tall man, was ransacking the drawing-room. His back was turned —a circumstance which deprived him of his one

chance of escape. Macready flung his sixteen stone of bone and muscle upon him, jerked his head sideways, and broke his neck.

He quickly transferred the dead man's *puggaree* to his own head—not without a grimace as he did so, for the mutineer's headgear was not too clean. It did not sit particularly well either, for Macready had a larger head than his victim. But he had no time to unwind it, and he promised himself to make it a better fit later on. His own uniform would pass muster.

Next, he transferred the sepoy's puttees and shoes to his own extremities. Here he was in luck, for the man's feet were large for his size, and his shoes fitted Macready sufficiently comfortably.

He now donned his second victim's cartridge belt, which was more than half-full of ammunition. Then, before the house should be visited by other bands of mutineers, he quitted it, his rifle and blood-stained bayonet over his shoulder, and bent his steps, waywardly and loiteringly, as became a mutineer, towards Old Delhi, the heart and centre of the revolt.

IV.

Meanwhile the scenes in which he had just taken part were being reproduced all over Northern India, with every circumstance of atrocity and license. Englishmen were killed defending their women, women were outraged after their defenders had been murdered, children were tossed from bayonet to bayonet. Property was destroyed wholesale. British control had been growing weaker and weaker by degrees, and now it had snapped. And robbery, outrage, murder, and anarchy emerged from their lurking places, shook themselves, and stalked abroad.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

I.

A Council of War was held in Delhi at six o'clock in the evening of Friday, the 7th November, at the Pindarinagar Palace.

All the members were present. An atmosphere of excitement pervaded the room. Bijli Rao's eyes glittered as though he were in the first stage of intoxication. His wide rapacious mouth frequently opened in a grin. His staunch adherent, Chittoo Bhunj Rao, looked like a terrier that has just killed a rat. Prince Mahomed Tughlak seemed a little more animated than usual, but his heavy face registered nervousness. Seraj-ud-dowlah alone looked unmoved. Rash Bihari was cool, succinct, and polished in his speech, but he was not, and did not look, happy. If the British had been like most other races, he would have been fairly content with the day's work—half a dozen of the principal cities in Northern India in possession of the rebels: the few Englishmen and Englishwomen in them who had not been slain, fleeing along the highways, or hiding in the jungle or in disused buildings. Not a hitch anywhere. Even at Risalpur, the main air camp, the rebels had been extraordinarily lucky. There had been a local epidemic of influenza, and half the Air Force had been down with it. Before the other half could be roused, irreparable damage had been done. The Air Force deliberately set fire to the remaining machines to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy; and then, selling their lives as dearly as possible, had been cut down to a man. The British in Northern India—such of them as had survived—

were completely without air support. And without air armament it is difficult, if not impossible, for a modern army to exist.

But there were two big flies in the ointment. In the first place the rebels had failed to seize any of the great ports. In Calcutta they had been completely forestalled. In Bombay, Karachi, and Madras they had been able to impart a greater measure of surprise into their attack. But here, too, they had had to deal with a strong non-official British element which had been more or less prepared for events. The result was that, beyond inflicting a certain number of casualties upon the British—and these had been heavy in proportion to British unpreparedness,—they had failed to do them any serious damage. The British mercantile element, reinforced by the refugees from the mofussil districts, had clung to the ports with all its old tenacity. So that, while the rebels had been victorious all over Northern India, they were high and dry. The only outside help they could expect was from Bokharistan in the north.

But—here came in the other fly—Bokharistan had made no sign. If it had fallen in with the revised plan, and had sent over 500 planes to join forces at the moment when the rising took place, the rebels would not only have been masters of Northern India, but they would certainly have been able to seize at least one of the ports.

But Bokharistan had hitherto done nothing.

These were the chief reasons for the uneasiness which Rash Bihari felt, and which he strove successfully to hide from the others. There was besides a third motive in operation which, although it was a little more in the background, was almost as influential. The rebels had done just what he was afraid they would do—they had broken loose the moment they had felt the snapping of the British

yoke. They had gone mad with blood lust. They had slaughtered every white person that had fallen into their hands. True, many of the atrocities which were afterwards debited to them were not of their doing. They were the work of the criminal classes who, in India as elsewhere, always come into the open at a time of anarchy.

It was so in the last great Mutiny. History was only repeating itself. But Rash Bihari felt specially bitter about it because he had foreseen it, and had implored his confederates—especially Chittoo and Seraj-ud-dowlah—to control their men. These ferocious fighters, however, were strangers to the qualms of the more refined Bengali, and to the fear of reprisals which was his chief animating motive. They looked upon rape and murder as the natural concomitants of victory. They approved of the atrocities, and, even if they had not, they would not have been prepared to thwart their soldiers and damp their ardour at the very beginning of the struggle. Moreover, they were themselves excited by the completeness and comparative ease of their own triumph. They now felt so confident of ultimate success that they were less inclined than ever to listen to counsels of moderation.

Sir Bijli Rao was more alive than his two henchmen to the dangers of reprisal. He was, however, a Mahratta, as ruthless in action as he was unscrupulous in his plans, and had many grievances, real or fancied, to wipe out. He had a tremendous ambition to satisfy. He knew that if he failed to wrest India from the British he was doomed either to execution, or to a lifelong imprisonment, which would be far worse. In any case there was nothing to gain by restraining the murderous tendencies of the mutineers, and he did not care whether they indulged them or not.

Rash Bihari therefore felt himself in a minority

of one so far as his misgivings were concerned. Things had gone very differently from what he had planned, but he felt, with further qualms, that he had gone too far to retreat.

II.

The Council were individually aware that Lahore, Lucknow, and the other great stations had fallen, and it was natural that in considering the formal reports that had come in, the rebel successes should receive the earliest attention.

These were presented accordingly. Chittoo Bhunj Rao grunted approval, his small keen eyes twinkling. The two Mohammedans were impassive. Bijli Rao eyed them at intervals. He was impatient to proclaim himself King of Delhi, but knew that things were far from being sufficiently ripe.

Then came the unfavourable reports. At Bombay the English and the Parsees had made common cause, and had bombarded the town from the islands in the harbour. The rebels had been driven out with loss and were resting at Kalyan. In Madras the untouchables had actively assisted the British. Two thousand Brahmins had been killed. The rebel sepoys had actually been ambushed and had been badly cut up. Madras remained British.

At Karachi the rebels had succeeded in largely destroying the aerodrome and landing-ground. But they had been attacked while doing it, and had been driven into the desert.

"It is fortunate that we have not had to deal with the British merchant in this part of India," commented Bijli Rao with a sneer. "The British soldier is a much easier proposition."

"I would hardly say that, Your Highness," answered Rash Bihari. "The British soldier is

still formidable. It is his Government which has really handed him over to us. If the Government had had as much influence in Calcutta or Bombay as it had in Delhi, we should have captured them both."

"Well, as I have said before, I dislike Calcutta," said the Maharaja, "and anyhow it can wait."

As he spoke there was a knock at the door, and his wireless operator was admitted. He brought a newly-decoded wireless, which he handed to the Maharaja in silence. Bijli Rao read it eagerly and then, with an oath, tossed it over to Rash Bihari.

"Bokharistan is hedging!" he exclaimed. "Read that aloud, if you please."

Rash Bihari read as follows :—

> "Begins. Regret unable despatch aeroplanes. Advancement of date not understood. Despatch army corps being considered. Will advise as soon as decision has been come to.—AKBAR JAN, Foreign Minister. Ends."

Rash Bihari's voice grew hoarse as he read, and Bijli Rao, noting the fact as a sign of fear, grew instantly impatient.

"Well," he said, as Rash Bihari sat silent, "what do you make of it?"

The Bengali colonel recovered himself.

"It means, Your Highness," he said, "that Bokharistan is backing out of its pledges."

Both the Musulman councillors started angrily.

"That is a lie," declared Seraj-ud-dowlah.

"I wish I could agree with you," retorted Rash Bihari, feeling that his own fears were partially compensated by the ruffian's obvious discomfiture. "But, for a diplomatic communication, nothing could be clearer. The message distinctly says

that they are unable to send aeroplanes, either now or next week. The offer of two army corps is withdrawn."

"No!" thundered Seraj-ud-dowlah.

"Look at the message. 'Despatch army corps being considered. Will advise as soon as decision has been come to.' That means, if it means anything, that the despatch of troops has not yet been decided upon. And I will stake my reputation, gentlemen, that it never will be so long as we are engaged with the British in India."

There was a pause, broken by the Maharaja's resolute tones.

"You may be right, Rash Bihari," he said viciously. "I hope you are not, but it looks like it. These sneaks are going to let us take all the hard knocks that may be going, and then attack us when we are more or less exhausted."

"Your Highness is unquestionably right," rejoined Rash Bihari. "We shall come between two fires."

"Not necessarily," Bijli Rao demurred. "We have only come under one so far, and that has proved so feeble that we can easily turn and face the other if necessary."

His words put a little heart into his confederates. But the defection of their powerful ally had damped their ardour. The exultation with which they had entered the meeting was appreciably lessened. Unfortunately they were not any the more disposed to listen to Rash Bihari's next point.

"I suggest, Your Highness," said he, "that we should make a definite effort to prevent the recurrence of the atrocities which have taken place to-day. Our men have reproduced all the horrors of 1857 except the well of Cawnpore. The British took a terrible revenge for these outrages, and besides they throw a slur upon our cause."

"Rash Bihari!" exclaimed Bijli Rao angrily, "for a clever man you talk very foolishly at times. What is the use of speculating upon what the British would do if they got the upper hand? They have not got the upper hand, and they never will get the upper hand if we don't lose our heads. But if they do beat us this time, do you imagine that they will spare us, however much we try to restrain our troops? I tell you, we shall suffer all the same. And, besides, I hate the devils. They have lorded it over us too long, and whether we win or lose I am for punishing them, now that we have got the chance."

The others all murmured agreement, except Prince Mahomed Tughlak, and he did not venture to disagree.

The Council then turned to the details of concentration. The mutineers in the other centres, it was decided, were to be called to Delhi as soon as they had completely crushed the British and their local sympathisers. Some of them were already on the march. Rash Bihari explained how he would dispose them in groups all round the perimeter of Greater Delhi, leaving only a handful of troops in Old Delhi itself.

Prince Mahomed Tughlak took alarm, and spoke for the first time. His speech was slow and ponderous, like himself. His thoughts ran on the glories of his imperial ancestors. He hoped to be crowned Mogul emperor in the marble palace in the Fort, and was alarmed at the thought that he would be left without troops to maintain his imperial state. He did not voice all this, but heavily demanded that the rebel forces should concentrate in the city and Fort of Delhi.

To Rash Bihari's consternation, the Maharaja concurred. Bijli Rao divined Prince Mahomed's object, but saw only advantage to himself in giving

effect to it. The Mahratta wanted to get hold of the troops, and considered it would be easier to do this if they were concentrated and not dispersed.

"But," cried the bewildered Rash Bihari, "no one ever heard of modern troops being bunched up together in a walled town like Old Delhi. It is against all the text-books. And if the English catch us——"

"My dear Colonel Sahib," interrupted Bijli Rao, "you are too much inclined to go according to the text-books. These are all very well in their way, but they should be our servants and not our masters. If the English catch us, of course—but they are not going to catch us. If we have the troops under our own eye in Delhi, we shall be able to control them, and possibly prevent those outrages of which you complain. We can always march out and engage the enemy outside, when necessary. Besides, all the thoughts of our men are centred in Delhi. It would be a cruel disappointment to them if, after rising on behalf of the old city, they were now shut out of it."

"Besides," struck in Prince Mahomed Tughlak, agreeably surprised to find support in such a quarter, "there will be less desertion and discontent if they are housed in the city than if they have to spend months under canvas."

"But to bring them into the city is to court far greater dangers," protested Rash Bihari.

He was, however, once more overborne. Chittoo Bhunj Rao sided with Bijli Rao as a matter of course, and Seraj-ud-dowlah with Prince Mahomed. And after further vain attempts to reason with them, he shrugged his shoulders and said no more. But from that moment he became convinced that the rebel cause was lost. He looked upon his confeder-

ates as madmen, and cursed the day when, out of pique, he had resigned from the Army and begun to plot against the British Government.

In effect, the rebel Council resolved to concentrate their troops in Old Delhi, and to hold daily manœuvres around the Ridge.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

I.

At the time when he saw his sister leave for Calcutta by aeroplane on Monday morning, the Sultan of Jehanabad was convinced that the outbreak of the rebellion in Northern India was now only a matter of days. He reviewed all his troops, overhauled his equipment, and warned the officers in command that mobilisation might be ordered at any moment.

"I have boasted to some of my English friends that we can mobilise in twelve hours," he told them. "Don't let me down when I call upon you."

He hardly required their assurance that they would not.

Zahir-ud-Din now held conference by wireless with the Maharajas of Rajwarra, Babergunge, Jhelumgarh, and Jodhgarh—four of the most important princes in India. He ascertained that three of them were heart and soul with Britain, and would move their troops at the shortest notice whenever their duty to the Empire required it of them.

The fourth, Jodhgarh, sounded a little doubtful. He was a young man, just turned twenty, and the Sultan wirelessed an invitation to come and see him. It was a seven hours' journey by air, and the boy turned up at Jehanabad at three o'clock on Tuesday afternoon.

In the meantime the Sultan had been in wireless communication with nearly a dozen smaller princes in Rajputana. These he found almost unanimous in their desire to support the Government of India should any crisis arise. Their armed strength was

comparatively small. All told it did not amount to more than 5000 horse, foot, and mechanised units. But these troops would be led by the chiefs in person ; and they had the utmost confidence in the Sultan, and were whole-heartedly loyal to Great Britain. Zahir-ud-Din now knew that, with Jodhgarh in line, he could put 25,000 men in the field, and lead them by converging routes to Delhi.

Hardly had these communications taken place, when he was startled to receive a wireless from Calcutta telling him of the burning of Princess Roshanara's aeroplane and the murder of one of his retainers. He was, however, relieved to hear of his sister's safety, and of her intention to remain in Calcutta in the meantime.

On the arrival of the youthful Maharaja of Jodhgarh the same afternoon the Sultan met him, and motored him out to a review of the Jehanabad contingent—a perfect little army, complete at all points, animated by a strong *esprit de corps*, and by a remarkable devotion to the ruler himself. One felt it in the atmosphere : Jodhgarh felt it, and his eyes kindled. He was a handsome impressionable youth, tall and slender, with a classic profile, close shaven—a good specimen of the Rajput chief. The Sultan knew that if his word were pledged he would be faithful to the death, that he was generous, and that he feared nothing. He had been ' got at ' by the emissaries of sedition and Bolshevism—that was all.

The two princes drove back to the palace. The young Maharaja was silent most of the way. Zahir-ud-Din could almost hear him thinking. The Rajputs had long overcome their prejudices against eating with non-Hindus. The princes dined together, and then, after a brief interval of wireless and the private cinema, they adjourned to Zahir-ud-Din's sitting-room.

" Jehanabad," suddenly exclaimed the Maharaja, lighting his cigarette, " why shouldn't you be Emperor of India ? "

Like all the other princes, he spoke English perfectly.

This was not quite the opening the Sultan had bargained for, but he felt that it would serve his purpose as well as any other.

" Well, I'm hardly big enough for the job," he replied.

" You're the biggest man and the greatest sovereign prince in India," said Jodhgarh enthusiastically, " and you've got the finest army too."

" Even assuming all that, I don't quite see how it makes me eligible," answered the Sultan. " Nor do I specially wish to be Emperor. Why should I ? "

" Don't you feel that we've stood the English long enough, Sultan ? Why should they rule India, and order us princes about as if we were clerks ? I'm tired of the foreigners. We want an Indian overlord, and you are the best man for the post."

The Sultan smiled.

" Very good of you," he said. " I suppose I am as good as most of the other candidates. But consider the cost, Jodhgarh. Do you think it would be worth it ? "

" Sultan," said the boy earnestly, " I for one would follow you to the death. I would die happy if I felt that a man like you was on the throne of a united India."

" United India ! There you have stated the problem," the Sultan replied. " What hope is there of a united India if I should ever be mad enough to grasp at the supreme power ? How many Hindus, how many Rajputs would submit to the rule of a Mogul nobleman ? And if Pindarinagar succeeds in *his* ambition and attempts to set up a Mahratta

Empire at Delhi, do you imagine that I and a hundred other Mohammedan princes will acknowledge him as our suzerain? Never! We know how the Hindu dynasties failed to unite India. Even the great Mogul period was only a passing phase. Akbar himself, most enlightened of monarchs, failed to establish unity. And I am very far from being an Akbar."

"But surely," argued the young Maharaja, "surely we have learned a little since then. Surely we are not still necessarily dependent upon a foreign race for unity?"

"Do the Hindus and Mohammedans love each other any more than they did a hundred years ago?" asked the Sultan. "You know quite well that but for the presence of the British, they would fly at each other's throats."

"At first, perhaps. But they would learn to respect each other's religion—they would have to—to present a united front if India were standing alone."

"It is just because they can't and won't do that that the British are here," the Sultan pointed out. "And for the same reason, we should only get rid of the British to saddle ourselves with a still more irksome foreign rule. How would you like to dance attendance on a Japanese, or a Bokharistan Viceroy?"

Jodhgarh stirred uneasily.

"Oh," he said, "if we can't unite sufficiently to keep out that class of invader, there wouldn't be much advantage in kicking out the British. But it's a shame, Jehanabad—it's a damned shame that you and I and a hundred other princes should be tied to the British chariot."

"Not if we take a statesmanlike view of it," was the answer. "The whole question resolves itself into one of religious belief. The only hope

of unity for India lies in the discovery of a common religion. Until then it is essential that an enlightened outside Power should hold the balance. And while the British supremacy is sometimes irksome, it has its good points, Jodhgarh."

"Yes, I admit that," assented the Maharaja grudgingly.

"I will go a lot further than that," continued the Sultan. "I will say that it would be a crime to attempt to upset it, unless it were going to be succeeded by a rule so overwhelmingly superior that it would justify the appalling riot of anarchy and bloodshed which would accompany its disappearance. And that is why I could never lend myself to any movement which aimed at dislodging the British—even if others besides yourself offered me the throne of Delhi. But come, Jodhgarh, let's throw off the cares of State for one evening, and have two hundred up."

II.

The next afternoon, that is to say Wednesday, the 5th November, Zahir-ud-Din received a code wireless from Hardy. It decoded into 'Stand by.'

He showed the message to young Jodhgarh, who was with him in the *Dewan-i-khas*. The two princes had been inseparable the whole day. No reference had been made by either of them to the conversation of the evening before. The Sultan was content to leave the leaven of common-sense to work.

The Maharaja looked questioningly at his host after reading the wireless.

"That means, Jodhgarh," said Zahir-ud-Din, "that we are not the only people who have been talking and thinking of possible revolutions. The British in Calcutta are wide awake to the situation,

and are getting ready to spring a surprise upon—well, upon all who think of driving them out."

"Jehanabad!" exclaimed the lad, "I spoke foolishly last night. I see it clearly enough now. I assure you I am loyal to the British. There is only one thing I said that I will not retract. I will follow you to the death. What do you want me to do with my contingent?"

Impulsively he held out his hand, and the Sultan grasped it.

"I knew it would be all right, Jodhgarh," he said. "The first thing I want you to do is to go back to your State and mobilise at once. How long will it take you to do so?"

"Three days at least."

"Colonel Grimley commands?"

"Yes."

"Well, Maharaja, be sure to retain him in command—at all events, until you have fought your first battle. Let me see. You will be back in Jodhgarh to-night. Orders will issue to-morrow, and the contingent will be mobilised by Saturday night?"

"I have every reason to hope so."

"Then, my dear fellow, tell your people to pack, and let's go to the aerodrome at once. If by any chance the contingent shouldn't be wanted, I will wireless you to suspend mobilisation. But I fear we shall have no such luck. Be ready, then, by Saturday evening, and by that time, if not before, you may expect a wireless from me appointing a rendezvous for all the loyal chiefs. As likely as not it will be at Delhi."

III.

The next morning, Thursday, brought news to Jehanabad that stirred the Sultan as nothing that he could remember had ever done. It was a wire-

less from Roshanara describing the Calcutta *coup d'état* of the previous evening, supplemented by a message from Hardy repeating his warning of the day before.

The Sultan at once wirelessed the news to his allies, and added that this development was likely to force the hand of the Delhi conspirators. "Mobilise!" he told them. "Your help will be needed almost immediately. Be ready to assemble when and where I notify you."

On Friday something ominous happened. There was no broadcasting from Delhi. He wirelessed to the capital to find out the reason. There was no response. He sent an ordinary telegraphic wire. The Jehanabad office notified him that the Delhi end was dead, and the message could not be sent.

Later in the day broadcasting was resumed at Delhi, but the announcer was no longer a European. He was an Indian, who spoke well enough, but with a pronounced Bengali accent. Not only did the voice arouse suspicion, but the news given seemed grotesque, and helped to strengthen the feeling that all was not well at Delhi. He wirelessed to the Foreign Office there, asking a question the answer to which would have come within the routine of the Foreign Office in normal times. There was again no reply, but that, he told himself, might be because he was suspect. The day wore on to night, and he passed it in a state of feverish anxiety.

The bazaars were full of rumours that a revolution had broken out in Delhi as well as Calcutta. At first he had felt inclined to ignore the Delhi rumours, thinking it possible that the two capitals had been mixed up; but the rumours gained strength. He remembered his failures to get in touch with Delhi, and again experience had taught him that persistent bazaar rumours often proved to be founded on fact.

He knew the reports of the Calcutta rising to be true. Why not those relating to Delhi ?

The first authentic news of the mutiny came from Hardy, and reached him in the evening. Almost immediately afterwards private wireless messages came through from his allies, Jodhgarh and Rajwarra, asking for the rendezvous.

Zahir-ud-Din's problem was how to concentrate his widely-scattered allies. It was simplified by the fact that, with the exception of Jhelumgarh and Simiala, they were all situated to the south of Delhi. On the other hand, it was complicated by the fact that Jhelumgarh's 5000 had to pass what was now, doubtless, a rebel stronghold—Rawalpindi.

Accordingly he wirelessed to Jhelumgarh to stand fast, but to hold his air force ready to act at a moment's notice. The other princes he directed to meet him at Muttra in a week, or at the latest in ten days. Muttra, on the Jumna, was, and is, one of the holiest places in India. It was also within striking distance of Delhi.

The Sultan now sent a code wireless to Hardy, notifying him that he had mobilised, and would move on Delhi next day, Sunday.

He mentioned the names and numbers of his allies. His own army was ready to the last detail, and his route had been completely mapped out. His State railway was mobilised, and every carriage and truck had been commandeered. Even so, it could not provide sufficient transport for his 10,000 men. He accordingly despatched them in relays. The first contingent was carried as far as the foreign railways were loyal. When they were stopped at Ganpore the troops were detrained, and the train came back to Jehanabad for a fresh load. Meanwhile the detrained troops made their way steadily northwards, assisted by light motor transport which had accompanied them on the trains. The tanks

moved more slowly under their own power. The Jehanabad Air Force, consisting of fifty machines, covered the advance, and scouted a hundred miles ahead.

The Sultan waited to see the last of his troops leave Jehanabad. Then he himself took to the air, and kept in touch not only with his own army on the march, but also with those of his allies. Each day he notified Hardy of his progress, and received an acknowledgment.

There was little opposition to their advance. On the contrary, they were welcomed in many places when it became understood that they were on their way to Delhi to restore law and order. Anarchy was already rampant. All the lawless elements had come to the front. Rape, murder, and robbery were widespread. Those who had money buried it, or fled carrying it with them. Grain was hidden. Famine was threatened. The constructive work of administration and the building up of general prosperity were undone almost in a night.

There were, of course, others who rejoiced in the confusion, and looked to share in the loot when the hated British had been driven out. These grasped their arms and made for Delhi, singly or in groups. '*Dilli dur ust*' ('It is a far cry to Delhi'). The ancient slogan was once again revived, for the last time, as the sequel was to prove; for after this fateful year, 1957, it was never heard again.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN.

I.

Lord Quantock flew on Sunday from Rangoon to Calcutta. His Excellency alighted on the Ellenborough Course at three o'clock in the afternoon, and was met by Colonel Hardy, representing the Provisional Government. The Roughriders furnished a guard of honour.

The meeting was awkward. Knowing what had happened to Sir James Bowles, the Viceroy was by no means confident as to the reception he himself might expect. Up to the previous Sunday the policy of the Government of India and the Government of Bengal had appeared to be identical. Nor was Hardy to know how greatly the Viceroy's attitude had changed. Lord Quantock had first heard of the *coup d'état* from the India Office, immediately before the ignominious disappearance of the Grafton Government at home.

(Grafton and his colleagues had, in fact, resigned on the previous day, Saturday, shattered and demoralised by an irresistible outburst of popular indignation in London and the provinces; and Stephen Wortley, the Conservative leader, had formed a Government with St John Travers at the India Office, Sir Joseph Fenwick as Minister for War, Lord Hughenden as First Lord, and Barton Greer as Air Minister, while Air-Marshal Sir Bryan Neville had been appointed to the vacant chief command in India.)

The Viceroy's acquaintance with the details of the European revolt in Calcutta was extremely scanty. All he knew definitely was that Sir James Bowles, his Executive Council, and most of the Bengali politicians with whom he was on friendly,

not to say intimate terms, had been interned by the Provisional Government—that the British element was on top in Calcutta, and that Hardy was master of the local situation. His Excellency had also heard, though still more vaguely, of the rebellion in the north. But such reports as had filtered through to him had filled him with apprehension.

On his part Hardy was by no means at ease. He was, of course, ignorant of Lord Quantock's complete change of heart. At best he saw before him a long and possibly fruitless discussion, ending up with an ultimatum to the Viceroy. For all he knew, Lord Quantock might regard him as a pestilent revolutionary, and might refuse to recognise him, or permit him to exercise his newly-assumed powers.

The usual formalities were observed, however, when the viceregal plane landed. Lord Quantock descended from his saloon, followed by his Private Secretary, his Military Secretary, and an A.D.C.

Hardy stepped forward and saluted. The Viceroy raised his helmet. The two men then shook hands. Hardy was the first to speak. After inquiries about the voyage he said—

" Your Excellency is aware that I represent the Provisional Government appointed by Sir James Bowles a few days ago. Imagining that you would wish to discuss the situation with the least possible delay I arranged for Your Excellency to land here, where I hope to have the honour of escorting you to Belvedere."

The speech partially relieved the Viceroy's anxiety. The Provisional Government, then, was not personally hostile to him.

" It was well thought of, Colonel Hardy," he replied. " You are correct in assuming that I desire an early discussion of the situation. But the most important need of all is the facts, and I trust you will be able to enlighten my ignorance of these."

After saluting the Viceroy's staff, Hardy invited His Excellency to inspect the guard of honour. This done, he carried him off to Belvedere with the least possible delay.

The viceregal residence was a three minutes' drive from the landing-place. Hardy accompanied the Viceroy, sitting on his left. Scarcely a word was exchanged on the drive, but as soon as Belvedere was reached Lord Quantock shut himself up in his sanctum with Hardy, and enjoyed the first heart to heart talk which he had had for years.

Hardy had news of a varied character and extreme importance to give him. Further details of the revolt only confirmed its catastrophic completeness. The tale of butchery and destruction grew longer. The wholesale loss of European and Eurasian life surpassed the worst excesses of 1857.

The Viceroy listened conscience-stricken. To what extent were not he and his policy responsible for these frightful consequences? He wondered how he could have been so mad as to lend himself to the anti-imperial campaign of the Labour Government. Even the poverty which had been his excuse at the time now seemed an enviable condition compared to the ignominy which must attach to his name when the history of the mutiny came to be written.

Then came the story of the fall of the Grafton Ministry and the formation of Stephen Wortley's Cabinet. The new Secretary of State had telephoned that morning, and had held a long conversation with Hardy, during which he had briefly described the popular revolt at home, and had received in return an account of the *coup d'état* in Calcutta. The upshot of the conversation had been that the Provisional Government was instructed to carry on, and to report to London as soon as the Viceroy arrived in Calcutta.

Lord Quantock was too depressed by the situation

in India, by the difficulties confronting him, and by the thought of his share in the catastrophe, to exult over the downfall of his old enemies and taskmasters. He sat silent for some time after Hardy had ceased speaking, his head sunk on his breast.

Rousing himself, he summoned his Private Secretary, who had been busy in the interim opening and decoding messages. These were largely confirmatory of what Hardy had told him, but they filled in the picture, and gave additional details. The programme of relief drawn up by the new Government was studied. It promised an immediate reinforcement by air of 12,000 men, under Sir Bryan Neville, the new Commander-in-Chief, and an army of 100,000 within three weeks.

"What do you reckon our military losses at?" inquired the Viceroy of Hardy.

"At between 25,000 and 30,000, Sir," was the reply. "They represent, in fact, the total loss of our regular forces in Northern India."

"And the rebels?"

"Well, Sir, their strength can only be reckoned *ex pede Herculem*. They had at least 160,000 men at various stations. Their losses up to date have been nil, or next to nothing. But they will now, of course, be joined by all the riff-raff in the north—and then there are the Imperial Service contingents in the pay of the disloyal princes—say another 20,000. I should say that their total strength cannot be less than 200,000 regular troops, with perhaps half as many again of irregulars and cut-throats."

"Charteris," said the Viceroy to the Private Secretary, "will you try to get on to the Secretary of State on the distance?" The Private Secretary was, of course, aware of the change of Government at home.

When Charteris had left the room, Lord Quantock turned to Hardy.

"Colonel Hardy," said he, "whatever happens to me, I wish to put it upon record that you have preserved the prestige of Britain in Bengal. I wish to God that others—among whom I include myself—had had a little of your courage and vision. But, tell me—for you must have considered the situation in the north—can anything be done from this end to retrieve the situation?"

"I think it can," Hardy replied. "I don't see why we should not be able to spare three or four battalions from Calcutta. The back of the seditious movement has been broken locally, and one, or at most two European units, together with one of the University Corps, should be able to guard Calcutta from now on."

"My view," said Lord Quantock, "is that the rebels will concentrate at Delhi. Delhi is for them the symbol of monarchy, and I have always noticed the fascination which the place seems to have for the Indian mind."

"I agree with Your Excellency; and in that very anticipation I have arranged for a concentration of the loyal princes, with their armies, in the neighbourhood of Delhi within a few days."

"The loyal princes! That is good hearing. Are they organised?"

"Yes. The five principal States—Jehanabad, Rajwarra, Babergunge, Jhelumgarh, and Jodhgarh—have a definite understanding between them, and they, and several smaller States whom they influence, have a combined force of 25,000 men."

The Viceroy chewed the cud of further bitter reflections.

"Jehanabad!" he exclaimed. "It is what he might have been expected to do. A prince indeed! And to think—no, Hardy, it won't bear thinking of—the manner in which he received my ultimatum in this very room a week ago! And, by Jove, he

was right, as I told that little bounder, Sir James Bowles, immediately afterwards."

Hardy, who had heard the Sultan's account of the interview, noted with interest its reactions upon the Viceroy.

"The Sultan," he informed him, "is the head and front of the resistance which the loyal States and their rulers are about to offer to the revolution. If we win through, our victory will be largely due to him. But for his steadying influence, the entire Chamber of Princes would have gone over to the enemy."

"Yes, I expect you are right—I know you are right," replied His Excellency. "Of all the blunders we made, that was the most ineffable. Hardy, I can't resign—I have no right to resign—until I have done something to retrieve them."

Hardy was silent.

"You," continued Lord Quantock, "are in touch, then, with the loyal princes?"

"The Sultan and I are in daily communication. He is setting his army in motion to-day."

"Now, listen to me," continued His Excellency. "You have staved off the danger from Calcutta, and you are wanted elsewhere. What I propose is that you should take command of a Calcutta contingent with the rank of Brigadier-General, and move to the capture of Delhi, co-operating with the loyal princes."

"I had thought of that myself," Hardy answered, "but have not felt at liberty to leave Calcutta until a regular form of government was re-established."

"I will see to that," replied His Excellency. "As Viceroy and Governor-General I will issue an Ordinance creating Bengal an imperial province administered directly by myself in Council. The Government of India must have its capital somewhere, and as Delhi is in the occupation of the

rebels, what more natural than that it should revert to its former capital in Calcutta ? "

Hardy's eyes lit up. " By Jove, Sir ! " he exclaimed, " I believe you have hit on a very happy solution of the difficulty. And, once having established your capital in Calcutta, is there any reason why it shouldn't remain here ? "

" None at all so far as I am concerned," replied the Viceroy. " I loathe Delhi—so does everyone who has ever lived there,—and I have always felt that a criminal blunder was made when the capital was moved from Calcutta. This is our natural base. Calcutta is a purely British city, protected by the sea. Delhi has been a graveyard for centuries—and now it is once again living up to its reputation. The number of lives lost there must be appalling—Delhi will have to be enlarged to make room for more graves."

Another pause. Then—

" I am willing to accept the command of the Calcutta brigade on one condition," said Hardy, " and that is that Your Excellency gives the first refusal of it to General Stewart, now Military Governor of Calcutta. General Stewart came to our aid at a very critical moment. He took big risks in placing himself at the disposal of the Provisional Government, and the fact that we have held Calcutta is due in large measure to him."

" I will offer General Stewart the command, by all means," replied Lord Quantock. " But, in any case, I promote you to Brigadier-General. I am anxious that you should go to Delhi. Not, believe me, because I want to get rid of you from Calcutta, but purely in the interests of the energetic prosecution of the campaign. You know Jehanabad, and are in touch with the loyal princes. Sir Bryan Neville, the new Commander-in-Chief, has never served in India, and will require the assistance of a

man who speaks with authority, and can look at things at the same time from the citizen's point of view. I desire, General Hardy, that you will in any case accompany the Calcutta column, and I will make that point clear to General Stewart."

"I doubt whether, in that case, he will accept the command."

"That will dispose of the only obstacle to your leading the column. And I firmly believe, Hardy, that you are essential to the success of our campaign."

II.

At His Excellency's request, General Hardy remained at Belvedere until the Viceroy had finished his conversation over the long-distance telephone with the new Secretary of State. It was clear from Mr Travers' opening sentences that he took Lord Quantock's resignation for granted. The Prime Minister had, in fact, already nominated his successor. But the Secretary of State was taken aback by the Viceroy's immediate and downright refusal to resign.

"I admit," he said frankly, "that I deserve everything that is coming to me, and when this trouble is over I shall be perfectly willing to stand my trial or face impeachment. But I feel that I must and can see this business through better than the best man you could at the moment send out to replace me. To begin with, the Government of India has ceased to function for the time being. The members of Council are marooned in different parts of India, and some of them have been done to death. If my successor comes out now, he will have no instrument with which to work. Now I am, for the present, independent of my Council. I know the ropes, and can carry on. Moreover, just because I have been in touch with the seditious element, I

know how to tackle it—and I mean to, God helping me."

"This requires consideration," said Mr Travers, nonplussed by the Viceroy's directness. "Frankly, Lord Quantock, we had intended to send out Lord Birchall to replace you."

"My old friend Birchall will certainly not wish to queer my pitch if you will be good enough to tell him my point of view," replied the Viceroy. "You see, apart from everything else, I feel I must do something to undo the mischief I have done. And I assure you and the Prime Minister that I can do much—more, certainly, than anyone who is new to the country."

Mr Travers was impressed, in spite of himself, by Lord Quantock's earnestness. He decided to take counsel with his chief before insisting on the Viceroy's resignation. In the meantime he discussed the situation over the wireless. He was agreeably surprised by Lord Quantock's grasp of the situation, and approved of his decision to establish the seat of the Government of India at Calcutta. He also approved of the despatch of a brigade to Delhi, with General Hardy in command.

"The Provisional Government disappears," he said, "and it is perhaps as well that it should do so, though I quite agree with Your Excellency that it has saved Bengal, and possibly the Empire."

The conversation lasted for nearly an hour, and when it was over Lord Quantock felt twice the man he had been. The scorn displayed by the Sultan at their last interview had rankled for a week. The crass obstinacy and folly of Sir James Bowles had stung him almost to madness, while the white revolt in Calcutta and the rebellion in Northern India had delivered him to the tortures of a conscience in which he had almost ceased to believe. Now, he felt he was being given another chance.

He looked years younger when he rejoined Hardy.

"Your promotion to General and your appointment to the command of the Calcutta contingent are confirmed," he told him. "As for myself, they have not pressed my resignation, and, please God, Hardy, I hope to do something to avert the consequences of the folly of the Graftons, the Derwents, and I am afraid I must add of the Quantocks and the Bowles's."

His Excellency had still several matters to discuss.

"Send me the three best men in the Bengal Secretariat," he said. "I will draft them *pro tem.* into the Government of India, and begin the reconstruction of the Home and Foreign Offices at least. The Finance Department must wait."

He also requested Hardy to communicate with the Military Governor and arrange for the return of Sir James and Lady Bowles to England.

"I will call and see them both to-morrow," he said, "and they ought to be out of Calcutta within the week."

On taking his leave Hardy drove at once to the Legislative Council building, and saw General Stewart. As he had expected, the old warrior declined the command of the Calcutta column. He had several reasons for doing so, he said.

"First of all," he explained, "you are obviously the man to lead Calcutta troops to victory. You are the John Nicholson of Calcutta. Damn it, Hardy, you *are* Calcutta. Your irregulars will follow you as they would never follow me.

"Also, I find my present post decidedly interesting. I am glad His Excellency doesn't propose to put an end to martial law. I shall find plenty to do keeping Calcutta quiet, while you and Bryan Neville between you win back Delhi for the Empire. Apropos, what force are you leaving behind for the protection of Calcutta?"

"The Port Artillery, a battalion of University volunteers, the Civil Guard, and the armed police."

"Well, we ought to be able to hold the place with these. You are taking the other University battalion with you?"

"Yes, they deserve it, the plucky fellows. They have been blooded here, and I have no doubt they will give an excellent account of themselves. The other units will be the Roughriders, of course, the Cossipore Fencibles, the Caledonians, and the three Essex companies."

"A compact little striking force. Well, go in and win, Hardy. You had to make your own chance when you formed the Provisional Government. You now have your chance ready-made, and waiting for you. Be sure to make the best of it—although I know you will."

"Thank you, General. I had better lose no time, anyway, in getting ready. By the way, the Viceroy would like arrangements made for the departure of Sir James and Lady Bowles. He himself wishes to take up his residence at Government House."

"By Gad!" exclaimed the General, "I begin to see all sorts of possibilities for Calcutta."

III.

Hardy walked across to Government House, and joined his colleagues of the Provisional Government.

"Well, gentlemen," he greeted them, "our short reign is over. The Viceroy and Governor-General assumes charge of Bengal *pro tem.*, and the Provisional Government is dissolved."

"On what terms?" asked the cautious Clough, whose face, nevertheless, wore a look of relief.

"A complete indemnity, and approval of all

we have done. But you, Clough, Sir Apurbo, and the Nawab had better remain in session for the present. His Excellency will doubtless desire to consult you with a fair amount of frequency, at first, at all events."

"And what about you and me, Hardy?" asked Colonel Crichton, his keen hazel eyes lighting up with expectancy.

"We are for the north, Colonel," was the genial reply. "I am to command a brigade which is to set forth within twenty-four hours, and the Caledonians will be one of its principal units. I will ask you, Crichton, to meet me at the Rough-riders' headquarters in an hour's time to discuss the question of transport."

Hardy proceeded to give his colleagues the gist of his conversation with the Viceroy, and of the Viceroy's with the Secretary of State. Excusing himself, he then rushed off to the Northern Hospital in search of Roshanara.

In order to explain the Princess's whereabouts it is necessary to go back to the previous Friday, when she had last given Hardy tea in Government House. On that occasion she had reminded him of his promise to permit her to organise a nursing service specially for the benefit of the University boys who were risking, and sometimes losing, their lives at grips with rebellion. After a momentary hesitation he had agreed to let her go up to the fighting line.

Escorted by Montgomery, who had been specially charged to guard her, Roshanara drove to the network of hospitals which abuts on the students' quarter of Calcutta. Selecting one of them, she found it a scene of wild confusion. Discipline was fairly slack at the best of times among the Eurasian nurses and low-class menials who constituted its personnel; but the events of the past two days had strained the nerves of the staff to breaking

point. Many nurses had fled, and those who remained were bewildered and apathetic. There were two Eurasian surgeons on the spot, overworked and almost exhausted. Fresh student casualties were coming in every hour, and being left anywhere—on verandahs, or in passages, uncared for.

The Princess's arrival changed all this. She had that magic gift called personality, which can make people forget that they are tired, hungry, overworked, and frightened. She at once got the staff to work to attend to the most urgent cases. She telephoned to the Medical College for another surgeon, and two were actually sent. The menial staff worked like Trojans. In a couple of hours she had diffused a sense of order and courage throughout the hospital, enormously to the relief of the casualties, who continued to pour in as the street fighting went on.

She slept at the hospital that night, and the next, Jim Montgomery taking his charge very seriously, and remaining always within call. Saturday and Sunday were full, busy, but satisfactory days. The hospital machinery was once more running smoothly, as though it had been thoroughly oiled and overhauled, and Roshanara would soon have moved on to another clinic in order to straighten things there, but for Hardy's visit that Sunday evening.

He found the Princess in the matron's room writing up reports, and looking deliciously cool and fresh in her nurse's garb. She smiled, and called for tea as soon as he made his appearance.

A strong feeling of *camaraderie* was growing up between them. He was taciturn by nature, but was waking up to the delight of having a kindred spirit—and that a highly born and most charming woman—to share his views and aspirations.

Whereas, to his colleagues, he had described his conversation with the Viceroy in the barest

outline, to the Princess he gave what was practically a verbatim report.

When he told her of the Calcutta contingent, and of his appointment to command it as Brigadier-General, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes were even more brilliant than usual. She held out her hand, which he grasped and kissed.

"I'm so glad, Colonel Hardy—I mean, General Hardy," she said. "How well it sounds!"

"Princess!" he exclaimed almost involuntarily, "if you like it—if it gives you any pleasure, that is all that matters."

Her eyes fell. She passed on rapidly to the suggestion which had at once flashed upon her when he mentioned the coming expedition.

"You will require a nursing staff, of course?" she commented.

"Naturally," he answered, "and that is why—or one of the reasons why—I wanted to see you at once. Can you organise a nursing staff, and be ready to accompany the column in twenty-four hours?"

"It is short notice," she replied, "but I can recruit at least half a dozen useful nurses in that time—three times as many if I had a few days to collect them."

"I knew you would be able to do it," said Hardy, "and we must start to-morrow evening. We have to meet your brother at Muttra, if possible, within a week."

"Dear old Bay!" she murmured. "How splendid to see him again! And how wonderful to think of both of you at the head of your armies, co-operating for the restoration of British rule!"

It thrilled him to hear her coupling him with her much-loved brother at such a moment; and hopes which he had more than once crushed came to life again, to inspire him anew, and to nerve him to the work that lay before him.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.

I.

THE experiences of the Jones-Knyvett party when they fled from New Delhi on the morning of 7th November were more or less those of several hundred English or Anglo-Indian families who were taken by surprise by the outbreak, but who were fortunate enough to escape with their lives.

In face of a sudden catastrophe the average man who feels bewildered as to where he should go, naturally makes for home. Mr Jones' early home had been in Agra, and, feeling that no place was really safe, he decided to make a dash for that station, which meant a run of a little more than a hundred miles.

As the party passed along the road leading to Tughlakabad, they came upon scores of English and Anglo-Indian fugitives, flying in various directions—mostly in the opposite direction to that in which they were going. Some were in cars, others on bicycles, others on foot. A few were actually making for Old Delhi, in spite of the double and treble dangers in wait for them there.

The good-natured Mr Jones responded to several appeals for transport, until his little car was carrying nine people, including the wounded soldier, whose groans and screams at the slightest jolt were heart-rending. Knyvett gave his place in the front seat to a woman—one of many—who had lost her husband. She took 'Bubbles' on her knee, while Knyvett stood on the running-board, balancing, or rather overbalancing, the Jones' bearer, Rahmatullah, on the other side. Rahmatullah was an ancient retainer, of whose loyalty they were certain,

and whose presence with the party would, they hoped, afford them a certain measure of safety in an emergency. This hope he fully justified later on.

II.

Having loaded up his car with nine human beings, including an infant in arms rescued from the grasp of a dying mother, Mr Jones put on speed. A few miles brought them to the massive walls and fort of Tughlakabad—one of the numerous derelict Delhis—which flanks one side of the road for a mile or two, opposite the beautiful tomb erected for a Tughlak king by the son who murdered him. On they went, past villages and tombs for more than eighty miles, along fine but dusty roads, taking care to avoid the sacred city of Muttra, and skirting the State of Bhurtpore.

A run of three hours or so brought them almost in sight of Agra. They were approaching Sikandra, the impressive tomb of Akbar, the greatest of the Mogul emperors. A magnificent gateway gave entrance to a spacious paved court, and this again led to the great tomb itself.

As they drew near to Sikandra they saw a knot of moulvis at the outer entrance, evidently in a state of much excitement. Mr Jones automatically noted this fact as an unusual one. As a rule the moulvis attached to the tomb wait for their tourist victims within the precincts. The moulvis, he now observed, were talking to a small group of sepoys, whom he immediately put down as mutineers. Their uniforms were flung on anyhow, their tunics were half-open, and their rifles, with bayonets fixed, were slung behind their backs.

Mr Jones slowed down, and three sepoys quickly unslung their rifles and moved into the middle of the road, with the obvious intention of stopping

the car. His suspicions confirmed, he suddenly decided to increase his pace, and charged them at a speed of nearly fifty miles an hour. They stood their ground as long as they dared, which was about three seconds, and then leaped aside. At a shout from Mr Jones, everybody in the car bent low as he turned sharply to the right, and tore down the road leading to the village of Shahgunge.

Several bullets now whistled over their heads, and one found the radiator cap, knocking it off. The nerves of the marksmen had presumably been affected by their narrow escape from being run over. Their view also was obscured by trees and a cactus hedge.

Mr Jones drove on furiously, until the little party was well out of range. Then Knyvett, leaning forward, gripped him by the arm.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To Agra, of course."

"Shan't we be simply running into trouble?" asked Knyvett. "These men were obviously mutinous sepoys from Agra, and their presence here means that Agra is in the hands of the rebels."

After looking ahead and glancing round him Jones slowed down and stopped. There was no human being in sight. It was nearly noon, and although the cold weather had begun, the sun beat down fiercely upon the little party through an opening in the avenue of trees. The wounded Suffolk moaned, and asked for water. Mrs Jones supplied him from a patent flask. The highway stretched before them, white in the noon-day glare. The road was shaded with shishum and peepul trees, interspersed with mango topes; and peaceful fields lay on either side of it.

Jones and Knyvett looked at each other, perplexed. Two of the women asked why the car was stopping, and implored the driver to go on.

"Yes," said Mr Jones, "I am perfectly willing to go on, and am only stopping to consider where we are to go to. Agra is apparently out of the question. Aligarh is bound to be in the possession of the rebels. In fact, there probably isn't a safe place within 500 miles of us."

He knitted his brows in perplexity. There was a pause, every second of which meant the loss of valuable time.

Suddenly Rahmatullah, the old bearer, heaved himself up to a standing position on the running-board on which he had been crouching. He understood perfectly well what the colloquy was about, and he did not require to know English to be aware of their difficulty.

"Huzoor," he said respectfully, "if this slave may speak, let us make for Fatehpur Sikri. It is my native village, the khansama at the dak bungalow is my brother—and as it is a deserted city the *budmashes* from Agra are not likely to come near it. The huzoors and the mem-sahibs will there be safe for the present."

"By Jove, I believe he is right," exclaimed Knyvett. "There will be ample room to hide in those old buildings, if necessary; and the rebels will not begin to think about Fatehpur Sikri for a long time."

"Your suggestion is a good one, Rahmatullah," said Mr Jones, after another pause. "But are you sure of the fidelity of your brother, and of your people?"

"Huzoor," was the fervent reply, "I will answer for their loyalty with my own life."

"Then Fatehpur Sikri be it," said his master.

The way was simple enough. They only had to keep right on, and to turn to the right on reaching Shahgunge instead of to the left—a direction which would have brought them into Agra. After passing Shahgunge the party found themselves bowling

along a fine road almost parallel to that which they had traversed from Delhi. Forty minutes later they caught sight of the famous 'Gate of Victory,' and in five minutes more were climbing the low eminence on which Akbar's deserted capital is built.

III.

Fatehpur Sikri—literally 'Sikri, the City of Victory'—is a wonderful walled town twenty miles or so from Agra. It was the capital which Akbar built for himself, but deserted in a night for some reason unknown, although many reasons have been put forward for the move. The great Emperor left it in a state of perfect order, with its walls, its audience chambers, its treasury, its pavilions, and its magnificent public buildings intact. Lord Curzon restored it regardless of cost at the beginning of the century, and since his time the Government of India has kept it in a state of preservation, only converting its wonderful treasury into a dak bungalow, and perpetrating a few other vandalisms. It is completely deserted, except for a few poor moulvis, or teachers, who act as guides to tourists, and carry on schools for the benefit of the children in the surrounding villages.

It was nearly two o'clock when the party arrived at the dak bungalow. The old khansama came forth, salaaming. He was full of concern as Jones and Knyvett lifted the ghastly form of the wounded Suffolk from the car, and carried him inside the bungalow. The poor lad had relapsed into a merciful unconsciousness, and almost at that moment breathed his last.

The old khansama led the way into a bedroom where they gently laid the poor mangled body. Two of the three women remained to do what they could.

As he turned from the room the khansama noticed his brother.

" Is it indeed thou, Rahmatullah, and is this thy sahib ? What meaneth this, and what is toward ? "

Rahmatullah explained the situation. " Their lives are as my own, brother," he said, " and I have vouched for thy fidelity. Our people have indeed eaten the salt of the Sirkar too long to be unfaithful now."

" Thou speakest true words, Rahmatullah, and I go to assure thy sahib that thou hast spoken truth."

The khansama then went up to Mr Jones.

" Rahmatullah has told me, huzoor, of all that hath happened at Delhi. *Garib parwa*, for generations my people have served thine, and eaten the salt of the Sirkar ; and this slave's life is thine. Rumours have come to these ears of strange happenings in Delhi, and there has been serious trouble in Agra city. In the past few days these eyes have seen many fugitives flying back to their villages from the city, with bazaar stories of plottings at Delhi and of a rising in Agra itself. For one grain of truth in bazaar tales there are many grains of lies, and so this slave disbelieved much that he heard. But what the huzoor has experienced shows that it must be true. The wind of madness has filled them, and they have forgotten the old tales which their fathers' fathers did tell them of that other great Mutiny—when nothing was safe once the hand of the Sirkar was removed—and the punishment which followed so speedily after. It is only a question of days, huzoor—the punishment will come. Praise be to Allah, here in Sikri for the present the mem-sahibs and the huzoors are safe."

The two men liked the speech, and were impelled to trust the old man.

" You say true words, khansama," answered Mr Jones in the vernacular. " And now, can you

bestow us safely in this bungalow—and can you feed us ? "

" *Garib parwa,*" was the reply. " This house and all it contains are thine, only it is the first any who are looking for fugitives would come to, and rumour hath wings. But I know of rooms by the Nawbat-khana and the Panch Mahal, in the old palace of Bibi Jodhbai, where none would look to find thee. This slave will arrange food, if the huzoor will trust his honour and the safety of the mem-sahibs and the *baba-log* to these poor hands. The mem-sahibs and the *baba-log* must not stay here. There is no certainty that *budmashes* will not come this way."

" But people have seen us arrive, khansama. How will you explain our disappearance ? " asked Knyvett.

" That will be easy, huzoor. Sahibs are always coming for an hour or two and then returning to Agra ; and at sunset the huzoors can make for the main road, as if returning whence they came. Darkness falls quickly, and village folk sleep early, and in these troublous times none will be abroad after dark. The huzoors can return on their tracks, and this slave will guide them to Jodhbai's palace. With the huzoors' permission I go now to prepare food, and get all in readiness. All save the women of my own household have gone citywards, and I am alone to do what is needful."

" Go, then, khansama," said Mr Jones. " We are going to trust the mem-sahibs and the *baba-log* to your safe keeping. If we come through you will not be forgotten, and the Sirkar will hear of your fidelity to the salt, and the great service you have rendered us. What is your name ? "

" Akbar Mahomed, huzoor," was the reply, as the old man salaamed profoundly and withdrew.

In a short time he produced a very tolerable meal, which was extremely welcome. The ladies

and children lay down to rest, but the men had a sombre duty to perform. Guided by Akbar Mahomed, they dug a grave behind one of the least frequented buildings : they dug it deep in order to preserve the gallant dead from the jackals ; and with a few simple prayers, committed to it the body of one of the many victims of a mistaken policy.

It grows dusk early in November, and shortly after five the whole party re-entered the car, and drove a short distance back in the direction of Agra. Then, turning the car as quietly as possible, and travelling at an easy pace, they returned to the deserted city, which they reached after dark. Hardly a sign of life greeted them from the villages as they passed through : every door was shut, and the roads were deserted.

Akbar Mahomed met them on the road with two lanterns, and escorted them through the dark and silent streets to the house of Jodhbai (the Hindu wife of the Emperor Akbar). The children were asleep, but all the others were conscious of the weirdness of the scene—a dead city round about them, whose hospitable walls, many centuries old, were about to guard living fugitives from the passions of a twentieth century rebellion.

The house of Jodhbai was bare and cold, and the rooms into which they were ushered had not an article of furniture. Rugs, cushions, and upholstery were, however, brought from the car, and these provided the ladies and children with rough couches. *Charpoys*, or light native beds, were also procured, and all settled down to an uneasy but not wholly unrefreshing night, the men taking it in turns to keep guard with Rahmatullah.

CHAPTER NINETEEN.

I.

A WEEK had passed since the outbreak at Delhi. Mutinous troops and rebellious princes with their armies were rapidly concentrating at the capital. The refugee seditionist leaders from Calcutta had preceded them by a few days. The strategic railways being in their hands, the rebel chiefs were able to move more rapidly than the loyalists. Mutineers poured in from Lahore, Agra, Lucknow, and Allahabad, and from dozens of smaller stations where they had risen and overpowered the microscopic British detachments opposed to them. Everywhere the incidents of the insurrection had been the same—ruthless destruction of British life and property. So ruthless had been the slaughter in some cases, and so satisfying the loot, that the guilty parties had thought fit to retire upon their ill-gotten gains. They had quitted the ranks and made for their native villages in the hope, first, of escaping punishment for their crimes, and secondly, of enjoying the fruits of them.

For the most part, however, the lure of Delhi was strong upon the rebels. There was magic in the name for all Indians. Glory and disaster were both associated with it, in song and tradition; but at crises like the present the disasters were apt to be forgotten, and only the glory came to mind. "*Delhi dur ust!*" was the cry, as they made for the rose-red city, many of them like pilgrims visiting a shrine. They believed that, once there, every ambition would be realised, everyone's fortune would be made. The hated British had been wiped out utterly: had they not seen this with their own

eyes? They deluded themselves with this belief, packed themselves into troop trains, and fared gaily towards the city of their dreams. At Delhi they would hail an Indian king. They were not very clear who he would be, but whoever he might be, they looked to him for promotion and reward.

So they poured into Delhi, filling the bazaars, swaggering about the streets, rejoicing in their freedom, resentful of discipline, and generally setting the leaders of the rebellion a problem very difficult of solution. The feeding and equipment of the large army that had congregated in Delhi by the 14th November 1957 was a task which tried the weary and dispirited Rash Bihari Das to the limit.

But these difficulties were by no means the most formidable which presented themselves to the wire-pullers of the conspiracy, especially to Bijli Rao and his associates. His princely confederates were now on the spot, and were very much in the mood to assert themselves. They had their own views as to what should happen when the British were driven out, and these were very far from coinciding with those of Maharaja Sir Bijli Rao or Prince Mahomed Tughlak. Some other conspirators were intent only on definite increases of their own territories at the expense of their neighbours; and when the summons to rise against the British had come, they had confined themselves strictly to the realisation of this ambition. They had simply annexed a neighbouring State, or helped themselves to a slice of British territory, and were now holding on to these acquisitions without attempting to reinforce the main body at Delhi. Bijli Rao and the other leaders for the present decided to take no notice of their conduct. There would be ample time to deal with them later when their own position had been made more secure. Besides, these princes,

by staying away from Delhi, had at least the negative merit of not adding to the complications which had begun to arise.

II.

As regards the more active participants in the rebellion, everyone of these, on his arrival at the capital, formed a party of his own. Many, if not most of them, were Mahrattas, and Bijli Rao, a Mahratta of Mahrattas, knew quite well that they were not philanthropists. Any help or co-operation from them would have to be paid for. And by the time he had satisfied their demands, how much of the spoil would be left over for himself?

Bijli Rao had fanned the flame of rebellion, never doubting his ability to control it. His vast wealth, his influence, his personal gifts, his enlistment of a Bengali organising genius, the resounding initial success of his schemes, had fed his conviction that he was destined to rule the Indian Empire. He had lured Prince Mahomed Tughlak into the conspiracy in order to use him as a stalking horse. He calculated rightly that his name would draw thousands of Mohammedans to Delhi, eager to see the re-establishment of a Mogul Prince upon the throne of Akbar. He had half-promised this to the dull but obstinate descendant of the Moguls. The result had been to set up claims which must seriously prejudice his own.

Prince Mahomed Tughlak was a fool, but he was shrewd enough where the exploitation of his name and descent was concerned. He had asserted himself three days after the mutiny. New Delhi was largely in ruins. The Parliament House looked like a wrecked gasometer. Government House had been not merely gutted, but blown up. The European residential quarters had been looted

and all property destroyed. The War Memorial arch at the foot of the Vista, the Mutiny Memorial on the Ridge, and every other symbol of British authority had been smashed to pieces. In three days New Delhi had gone to join the dozen old Delhis of which the tombs and mosques lie scattered for miles north and south of the city of Shah Jehan. The only houses left intact were the palaces of Bijli Rao himself, and of one or two other princes who were in residence. Otherwise New Delhi was a desolation.

Prince Mahomed made this one of several excuses for taking up his quarters in the Fort. His own house, he declared, was small and inconvenient, and it was not in accordance with his rank or traditions that he should live in a suburb which had been converted into a wilderness. He assumed that in due course he would be proclaimed Emperor, and in the meantime his presence in the Fort—which sheltered the remains of Shah Jehan's magnificent palace—would serve to give the revolt a centre and a meaning. He accordingly established himself there. The only modern buildings in the Fort were the European barracks, which had been a shambles three days before, but Prince Mahomed overcame this little difficulty. He impounded a number of luxurious tents and shamianas, which he erected amidst the gardens of the Fort; and, under spacious canopies, flanked by the marvellous *Dewan-i-Khas* and *Dewan-i-Am*, those dreams in marble and sandstone, he held his growing court.

Bijli Rao, powerless for the time being to control the Mogul, bound himself by a solemn oath to strangle the prince at the first available opportunity. He would have preferred to do it immediately, but to arrange for this at the moment was difficult—nay, impossible. On the contrary, Prince Mahomed must be encouraged to live until the position

they had won was consolidated. Afterwards the Mahratta could have it out with him.

The trouble was that, apart from the Mohammedans, who were Prince Mahomed's natural and inevitable supporters, a number of Rajput and other Hindu princes were obsessed by the old Mogul tradition, and tacitly accepted him as the coming Emperor of Hindustan. These, to be sure, were small fry who could not very well aspire to the throne themselves. But there were others—like old Maharaja Guj Singh of Chatterkote and Raja Maun Singh of Rajmahal, who each commanded 5000 men, and gave themselves airs accordingly. It was doubtful whether they would be prepared to yield precedence even to the descendant of the Moguls. It was quite certain that they would not countenance the pretensions of a man whom they looked down upon as a mere Mahratta cateran.

Thus a week after the outbreak, which he had done so much to prepare, Maharaja Sir Bijli Rao of Pindarinagar was easily the most dissatisfied man in Delhi. He, with Rash Bihari and their two swashbucklers, Chitto Bhunj Rao and Seraj-ud-dowlah, were still the brains and striking force of the rebellion. Without them, and without the organisation which they had built up, it must collapse; but at the moment there appeared to be no chance of utilising that fact to Bijli Rao's advantage.

III.

Meanwhile there was a vast amount of work to be done. The blow at the ports had failed, and this meant that the British Government could build up its shattered forces at its leisure. News now reached Delhi from Karachi of the landing of 12,000 men by aeroplane—the advance guard of the army of retribution,—so that it was clear

there was going to be very little leisure about it. The rebels' agent in Berlin also wirelessed the sailings of several dozen transports, and foreshadowed the despatch of a quarter of a million British troops to Bombay. The conspirators in Delhi had already heard of the despatch of the Calcutta column, and knew that the Sultan of Jehanabad was on the march. They had no definite information as to his strength, but were able to guess it with a fair amount of accuracy by a process of elimination. Nemesis, they felt, was already on their heels.

Rash Bihari Das toiled day and night at the work of organisation. He worked with the energy of despair. He knew that the knock-out blow had failed, that the British had been given time to retrieve the situation, and that, but for a miracle, their dogged genius was bound to restore it. If the ports had been seized, if Bokharistan had not failed them, all might have been well. As it was, he was convinced that disaster was only a question of time.

Nevertheless, he laboured at problems of ammunition and commissariat, of billeting and police. He accumulated the biggest of all ammunition dumps in the square before the great Jumma Musjid—perhaps the grandest mosque in the world.

Seraj-ud-dowlah angrily protested against the arrangement.

"What do you mean by this?" he asked. "Do you want the mosque blown up?"

"On the contrary, my dear General," was the suave reply, "I am simply protecting my ammunition. You know the English. They may see the dump, but they will never dare to explode it for fear of damaging the Musjid. Thus the dump and the Musjid will each protect the other."

Seraj-ud-dowlah grunted, but had to admit

the force of the contention. He himself was working from morning till night exercising the troops and setting up barbed wire defences round the wide circumference of Outer Delhi. Rash Bihari, backed on this second occasion by Seraj-ud-dowlah and Chittoo Bhunj Rao, as well as by two of the princes who had brought their troops to Delhi, had persuaded the Council to defend the perimeter. He had won over Prince Mahomed by giving him an escort. They were called the Imperial Bodyguard, and were clad in a magnificent green uniform copied from that of the Imperial Cadet Corps. This mollified the prince, who already heard himself, in imagination, saluted as Emperor.

Difficulties innumerable presented themselves to the rebel leaders. The brigading of the Imperial Service troops, the personal retainers of the smaller chiefs, and the mutinous troops of the regular Indian army, was a serious problem. The question of the chief command had also to be decided. Each prince wanted, if not to be Commander-in-Chief, at least to be a General commanding a Division. There were endless quarrels and recriminations, and one chief actually mustered his contingent and was marching it back to his State when Bijli Rao stopped him by pointing out that he would certainly be deposed, and probably executed if the British ever got hold of him.

Rash Bihari thought in despair of the classical story about the man who was condemned to make ropes of sand. A week had passed and the work of strengthening the defences, throwing up earthworks and entanglements, had hardly been begun. Each prince wanted his neighbour's troops detailed to do the work. The discipline of the mutinous regulars, already impaired by their initial success and by the orgy of looting and murder which had followed it, was giving way badly. The Council

spent all its time debating and quarrelling. Prince Mahomed had withdrawn himself almost completely from its proceedings. He had done this partly because he imagined that it concerned his prestige as Emperor-elect, partly because the Council still sat at Bijli Rao's palace, and he wished it to sit in his pavilion of State in the Fort.

Bijli Rao, Rash Bihari, and Chittoo Bhunj Rao now found themselves in a permanent minority in the Council. Nothing they proposed was agreed to, and the plans emanating from the other members were impossible.

IV.

At last, after the Council had discussed the subject of the Commander-in-Chief for two hours, and still had seven candidates before it, Bijli Rao, who was in the chair, rose and said—

"Gentlemen, I have had enough of this. I resign my office as President of the Council. I shall withdraw myself with my troops from Delhi to-morrow. Colonel Rash Bihari Das, who is my confidential military adviser, will go with me. So will General Chittoo Bhunj Rao. Whether you will conduct this campaign more efficiently when we have gone remains to be seen. All I have to say is that I prefer to die fighting with my troops around me, to being caught here by the British a few weeks hence, with nothing whatever done to prevent them from retaking Delhi. The Council is dissolved."

He rose, and retired immediately to his private apartments. Rash Bihari smiled grimly as he noted the consternation of the others. He and Bijli Rao held all the essential threads of the organisation of the rebel forces. The opposition were helpless, and they knew it. Rash Bihari waited for the climb-down. Nor was it long in coming.

"I trust, Colonel Das," said Maharaj Jeswunt Singh, one of the fattest and noisiest of the disputants—"I trust His Highness of Pindarinagar will reconsider his decision. He is one of our most important adherents—I may almost say he is essential to our success. I would request you, on behalf of my friends and colleagues, to wait upon him and induce him to withdraw his resignation."

"His Highness has discussed this matter with me," replied Rash Bihari coolly, "and I am authorised to hand you the only terms on which he will consent to remain in Delhi."

"And what are these?" asked Jeswunt Singh.

"They are very brief," answered Rash Bihari. "He requires to be made Commander-in-Chief, with supreme power over the civil and military population of Delhi. The Council will meet at his invitation, but not otherwise. In short, the entire direction of the war must be left in his hands."

"But this is intolerable!" exclaimed a younger member of the Council—an officer in the mutinous army, who was permeated with communistic notions. "We might as well be under British tyranny."

Rash Bihari rose. His confederate rose with him.

"In that case, gentlemen, there is nothing more to be said," he remarked. "The Maharaja and his contingent will leave Delhi to-morrow. Good evening."

He saluted and withdrew, together with Chittoo Bhunj Rao. The discomfited Council sat for half an hour longer, trying to decide how it could give in with the least inconvenience to itself; for the idea of carrying on the rebellion without the redoubtable Mahratta prince was immediately seen to be impossible. Eventually it resolved upon unconditional surrender, and sent in search of the Maharaja. But he had left the palace, and it was

not until a late hour that night that the news of his victory could be conveyed to him.

Bijli Rao at once proclaimed martial law, hanged the Bolshevik officer whose remark had been conveyed to him by Rash Bihari, ordered out the finest Imperial Service contingents to fatigue duty, and shot the first half-dozen men who refused. In a day he had infused a certain measure of order and discipline into the chaotic and ever-increasing thousands who were flocking into Delhi from all directions.

Nor was he a moment too soon in taking hold of the situation, for next day Delhi was bombed by a ragged but dauntless flight which had been collected and despatched from Cawnpore. True, it was overtaken and destroyed, but it had produced a startling moral effect.

CHAPTER TWENTY.

I.

JOHN HARDY and the Sultan had agreed to rendezvous at Muttra, but their first meeting took place on the plain outside the Elephant Gate of Fatehpur Sikri. Hardy's column was advancing more rapidly than the composite army led by Zahir-ud-Din. Both forces were moving by road, as the main railways were in the hands of the rebels. This was another result of the 'Indianisation' which had been forced on the country by the policy of Whitehall and Delhi during the previous ten or twenty years. Progress was, therefore, comparatively slow. The rebels had concentrated 100,000 men at Delhi in little more than a week. By that time Hardy's 4000, travelling at the rate of 200 miles a day, were nearing Agra. He himself, scouting in an aeroplane towards Muttra, had wirelessed to the Sultan suggesting a meeting outside Fatehpur Sikri for the purpose of a personal interview.

The Sultan's army had not advanced quite so far. His transport was as good as could be expected; but to move 25,000 men by road was a difficult proposition in India. He had endeavoured to follow Napoleon's dictum about scattering on the march, and concentrating for attack. His army was divided into at least six contingents. Four of them were commanded by their own Maharajas, and came from different States. They advanced by routes which were sometimes parallel, but always separate. The Sultan was able, however, to control the entire body, partly by wireless and partly by living in his plane and visiting each of the contingents almost daily.

Even so there was great delay, and a good deal of jealousy and friction. Desertions were an ugly feature. Discipline was not easy. Zahir-ud-Din, however, demanded this with a grim insistency, and compelled his colleagues to a shame-faced co-operation. On one occasion a Jodhgarh troop strayed from the main body and established itself in a village, terrorising the inhabitants and ravishing the women. The Sultan spotted them from the air, and swooped down to observe things. Not liking what he saw he landed, and shot two men dead. Two others fled; the rest surrendered. The Sultan and his A.D.C. stood guard over them until a detachment from the main body arrived to take them into custody. The story got about, and did much to steady the *moral* of the Allies. The peasantry contrasted the discipline which they enforced with the licence indulged in by the rebels. They had frequent and bitter occasion to point such contrasts.

Hardy's wireless was immediately responded to, and the Sultan appointed the Elephant Gate as the place of meeting. Hardy was the first to rendezvous, and the little group of refugees in Jodhbai's palace, from their secluded quarters, watched his plane circling for nearly half an hour. Then they noticed another plane make its appearance, saw the two exchange signals, and come to earth close to each other, outside the walls, and near a mango tope close to the Elephant Gate.

II.

The two commanders on alighting saluted formally, and then grasped each other's hands in silence, as men do who have given their whole confidence each to the other. The glow upon their faces spoke of more than mere mutual respect. It showed a

vital friendship which had ripened into affection. Each felt, in some mysterious way, that the other was his brother. Each thought at the same instant of Roshanara.

"How is Roshanara?" was the Sultan's first question, as he eyed the Englishman intently.

"Very fit indeed, Sultan. She is doing nobly as the organiser and director of our small nursing service. I asked her if she would care to fly here to meet you, but she felt it her duty to decline. She said it wouldn't be fair to the other nurses if she were given any special privileges. She is moving with the ordinary transport."

"Quite right, Hardy. Of course she would. I would have loved to see her with you, but duty comes first. How far off is your main body?"

"Less than a hundred miles. We shall be in Muttra to-night."

"It will take us at least three days to get there—all of us, that is. My own contingent and the Rajwarra body may straggle in the day after to-morrow."

"Our united strength will then be in the neighbourhood of 30,000," remarked Hardy, "and we shall have 150 planes, or thereabouts. That strength should enable us to carry out the new Commander-in-Chief's directions, though it will be a very difficult task."

"Bryan Neville has already begun to give orders, has he?" was the Sultan's comment. "Where is he?"

"At Karachi, but he will shortly leave for Bombay. We shall probably see him before Delhi in a week or ten days—if we can hang on so long."

"What, then, are your plans?" asked the Sultan. "As I have told you, Hardy, I and my contingent are unconditionally at the service of the British Government, and I will co-operate with you to the utmost. So far as anything is certain in this world,

it is also certain that the other princes will follow my lead. The question is—who is in charge of these operations ; yourself or the Commander-in-Chief ? "

Hardy leaned against the cock-pit of his machine.

" The position just at present is anomalous," he said. " You and I are in command of a small and composite army which we are leading against an entrenched enemy two or three times our number, and overwhelmingly strong in the air. The new Commander-in-Chief, who has a tremendous responsibility resting upon him, is at the moment without an army at all. He has just brought 10,000 men to Karachi by air, but these are held up, partly for lack of petrol, partly by the necessity of heading off the Punjab rebels from Karachi. Further heavy reinforcements are coming from England—some by air, most of them by sea ; but these cannot be moved up to Delhi in any strength for a fortnight or three weeks at least. Meanwhile you and I, together with any straggling British remnants from Cawnpore or any other stations, are called upon to contain the rebels at Delhi."

" It is like calling upon a wineglass to contain a whole magnum," said the Sultan. " I have heard that there are 150,000 mutinous regulars in Delhi."

" I don't know their numbers exactly," answered Hardy, " but whatever they may be, they certainly outnumber us very largely. The situation is extraordinarily like what it was in 1857, when a small British force clung to the Ridge for months, almost at the mercy of an enormously stronger rebel garrison."

" In other words, Hardy, we and our forces are to be butchered to make the reconquest of Delhi a procession for Bryan Neville."

" You don't seem to like him," said the other. " I'm sorry about that, because this is no time to cherish a grievance against our leaders. And, of

course, we always have the prospect of being relieved in a matter of weeks—possibly of days."

"You are quite right," the Sultan replied. "I have no business to gird at Neville. You don't know him, perhaps, but I do. An able fellow, doubtless, but amazingly self-sufficient. However, let it pass. He is C.-in-C., and we must pull together. But he has set us a hard task—almost a forlorn hope. Are there no British generals left to help us?"

"Very few of them, I am afraid," said Hardy. "The rebels made a clean sweep of them in the first few hours of the mutiny. In any case, Sultan, it is absolutely necessary that the British flag should be raised before Delhi, so as to leave neither the mutineers, nor the people of India, nor the world at large under the mistaken impression that we are quitting."

"I agree, Hardy—at all costs that must be done."

Zahir-ud-Din's handsome face, which had clouded over for a moment at the mention of Sir Bryan Neville, recovered its habitual cheerfulness.

"And where, do you think, we should fetch up at Delhi?" he asked. "Not, I take it, on the Ridge this time?"

Hardy shook his head. "No, that would be impossible. I am inclined to prefer a line from the Kutb to Tughlakabad. As soon as we have all assembled at Muttra we must go into it. Hullo, who is this?"

He indicated Akbar Mahomed, who had noted the descent of the two planes, and was now making his way to the scene of the conference. The Sultan's A.D.C. stopped him, but after a brief conversation brought him to the two commanders.

"Most Excellent," said the aide, addressing the Sultan, "this man says he is the khansama of the dak bungalow at Fatehpur Sikri, and has sought

us out to tell us that there are several Europeans, including women and children, in hiding in one of the old buildings in the city."

The old man was summoned, came forward salaaming profoundly, and told all he knew. Hardy, on hearing that they were European refugees from Delhi, demanded to be led to them at once. Excusing himself to the Sultan, who remained with the planes, he followed the khansama into the city by the Elephant Gate, and so to the courtyard of Jodhbai's palace, where, under one of the sheltering eaves which protected them from the prying eyes of enemy aeroplanes, he met and talked with Messrs Jones and Knyvett.

Hardy listened with absorbed interest to their exciting narrative. It brought home to him very vividly what hundreds of English and Anglo-Indian men and women must have gone through during the past week or ten days.

Mr Jones concluded by expressing the hope that it might be possible to remove the little party from Fatehpur Sikri.

"So far we have not been molested," he said, "and I am told that most of the Agra mutineers have gone off to join the main body at Delhi. But the whole country is utterly unsafe. The villagers live in a state of terror. Gangs of ruffians are roaming about the country, and no one knows who is going to be the next victim. Our party, besides ourselves, consists of three women and two children, and we should be thankful for any means of escaping from this prolonged torture."

"I sympathise very greatly with you, Mr Jones," Hardy replied, "but I am afraid I can do nothing for you to-day. To-morrow I will endeavour to send a motor transport to bring you all to Muttra. Meanwhile I must be off, but I won't forget you, and you can assure the ladies that it will be all right.

I am glad that decent old man has treated you well. I will see that his conduct is rewarded."

Hardy made his way back to the Elephant Gate, and rejoined the Sultan, though only to say good-bye to him. In ten minutes more they were both in the air, flying to join their respective commands.

Hardy was as good as his word. The refugees were all evacuated from Fatehpur Sikri by car next day, and brought to the British camp at Muttra. Here the babies were placed in charge of Roshanara's nursing service, and the three women enrolled as recruits. Knyvett was attached to the Rough-riders, Jones to the Cossipore Fencibles; and both took their full share of the gruelling which was in store for Hardy's famous brigade.

III.

Two days after the Calcutta column reached Muttra the Sultan with the greater part of his composite army arrived. On that day occurred the first brush between the air forces of the Allies and of the enemy. The result was to convince the Allies of the unpleasant fact that the air strength of the rebels was out of all proportion to their own. The practical destruction of the British Air Force on the first day of the mutiny was the sole outstanding triumph of Rash Bihari's organisation. It left the mutineers with a preponderance of 300 to 400 planes, including bombers and fighting machines, while the Allies mustered less than 150, and of these most were required for patrol and escort duty on the long line of communications. Moreover, the rebel fliers were regular airmen who had developed a high level of proficiency, and were both plucky and keen.

A rebel squadron picked up the Sultan's column as it was struggling into its quarters beside the

railway station at Muttra. It immediately attacked with machine-guns, creating a panic which called for all the influence which the Sultan and his officers could bring to bear to control. Allied aeroplanes came to the rescue. The Sultan himself went up in a two-seater machine, and presently found himself in great difficulties. He was attacked by two rebel single-seaters, and his pilot lost his head. The Sultan, who was endeavouring to reply to the fire of his opponents, was rendered almost helpless. The two-seater was riddled with bullets, and got out of control. The Sultan himself received a bullet through the fleshy part of the right arm. He and his companion would have been shot to pieces but for a reinforcement from Hardy's side. This, with the prince's machines, eventually drove off the raiders, one of whom crashed, the machine bursting into flames. The rest made off in the direction of Delhi, dropping a threat to repeat their visit next day in greater force.

"And they mean it, too," commented the Sultan on descending, as he walked slowly to the little hospital which his sister had established close to the railway station. He did not like the thought that their first meeting should be here, and that he should be a patient in her hands. But, as he immediately told himself, what hands could be gentler or more efficient?

Roshanara, who had witnessed the fight in the air, and had trembled for her adored brother, was full of gratitude that he had escaped so lightly. She treated him herself in the dispensary, sending away her officious assistants, and when she had him alone she dressed his injury, which was very slight, and then flung her arms round his neck.

"Bay, dear, how splendid of you!" she murmured, kissing him. "But need you have taken such risks?"

He was slightly pale from loss of blood, and she noticed with concern that he seemed strangely dejected—very different from his normal cheery self. He smiled, but it was with an obvious effort.

" I had to, dear, in order to put heart into my men. May I bring you good luck as your first casualty," he said, trying to speak lightly.

When the wound had been dressed he held her hand, and they talked of recent and coming events. He looked at her, she felt, with curious earnestness ; and the Princess, who knew his every mood, was filled with uneasiness and foreboding.

IV.

Roshanara had hoped that her brother would dine with her that evening, but was disappointed. The three leaders—Jehanabad, Jodhgarh, and Rajwarra,—with their staffs, dined with General Hardy, and afterwards discussed plans for the morrow. In view of that day's air brush it was certain that there would be an attack in force next day, and it was therefore decided to string out the allied column along the Delhi road as far as Kosikala, cutting up, at frequent intervals, the railway which ran almost parallel with the road.

After the other princes and officers had gone Zahir-ud-Din remained, and he and Hardy talked and smoked for some time.

Hardy noticed, with a pang of anxiety, a change in the Sultan's manner and looks. The two men had grown strongly attached to each other, and Hardy had become sensitive to his friend's moods. He glanced at him from time to time. Somehow, the glow and sparkle of his spirits had paled. Presently he lapsed into silence, and sat gazing intently into the fire.

Hardy was also silent. Then, conscious of a constraint in the air, he spoke.

"Are you all right, Sultan?" he asked. "How is the injury?"

Zahir-ud-Din started, and recovered himself.

"Oh, that!" he exclaimed; "there's nothing whatever to worry about in that. But," he added, after another short pause, "I must confess I am uneasy in mind, Hardy. I have been near death before, but have never felt quite so near seeing the gate open and looking into the beyond. It has set me thinking, Hardy—suppose anything should happen to me, what is going to happen to Roshanara?"

He brought his gaze level with Hardy's, and noted the sudden compression of his lips, and the dark flush which spread over the tan on his face.

"You see," the Sultan went on, "if I die she will be left absolutely alone, surrounded by enemies whom power and prominence always raise up in a native State, and possibly in a position of grave danger. Marry her off, you may say. Yes, but to whom? Dozens of princes would be glad to marry her, but frankly she hasn't met any Indian of her own rank whom she could accept as her husband, and she and I are completely at one in this. She has lived too long in England: she has become too deeply anglicised in her thought—and even her religious beliefs—to find a husband among her own people easily.

"Nor have the few white men who have sought her hand had better luck. Her standards are high, Hardy—and so are mine for her. I want her to be happy and safe if I don't come through this business. And that is why I am impelled to tell you here and now that, so far as I am concerned, there is only one man who I think is worthy of her, and whom I would welcome as a brother-in-

law; and that is yourself. I have said enough. I can say no more."

The tan on Hardy's forehead and cheeks glowed a deeper red. His breath came and went quickly. He raised his grey-blue eyes to the Sultan's, and at last he steadied his voice to reply—

"Sultan, I *have* raised my thoughts to your sister, and have wondered whether a princess of your house could ever condescend to plain John Hardy. I come of yeoman stock. So far as I know, I am alone in the world. And so I have never dared to hope. But you have made me hope, in spite of myself. If you think so well of me, possibly she may come in time to care for me. In any case, old friend, I swear to this. The Princess is the only woman in the world for me. If she ever accepts me, I will love her and honour her as no woman was ever loved. If she doesn't care for me I will still watch over her—in the event, that is, of anything happening to you. But I pray that we may both come through, and live for many years yet. In any case, set your mind at rest about the Princess. Whether she makes me happy or not, I will watch over her welfare as though it were my own."

"God bless you, Hardy!" exclaimed Zahir-ud-Din. "And I hope Roshanara will come to know and love you as I do."

They grasped hands in silence, and then the Sultan went back to his own quarters.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE.

(NARRATIVE BY JIM MONTGOMERY.)

I.

I HAVE never been able to sympathise with the Irishman's love of fighting for its own sake, and the fortnight during which Hardy's brigade and the allied Princes advanced from Muttra to Tughlakabad, and held the position against repeated assaults by the rebels issuing from Delhi, gave me enough fighting to last me the rest of my life.

It was simply ghastly. Our main trouble was weakness in the air. You see, our base was Calcutta, eight or nine hundred miles away—a distance which you couldn't ask the average lorry to do in much less than a week. The railways were in the hands of the rebels, and we had to rely entirely on road and air transport. Or rather, we had to rely mainly upon road transport, and a very considerable proportion of our hundred odd planes had to be used on convoy. The whole country between Calcutta and Delhi was in a highly disturbed state. No one was certain of his next-door neighbour, and we certainly could not be sure that any of the local rajas and zemindars were wholeheartedly on our side. Many of them were against us, and, besides, military stations such as Dinapore, Allahabad, Lucknow, and Agra were completely in rebel hands.

Of course, we got supplies from the peasants. Once they found we paid regularly and liberally we got quite large quantities of grain and vegetables. But Britishers can't fight on these alone, and besides

we required ammunition and military stores, which we could only get from Calcutta.

The Bombay contingent came in also, of course. Their base wasn't quite so far away as ours, and they were able to help with the commissariat as with the fighting.

Then there were the hospital arrangements. We had half a dozen military and non-official surgeons from Calcutta, and about as many assistant surgeons. Princess Roshanara had organised her small band of nurses splendidly. (I accompanied her and them as far as Muttra, and there I was promoted as orderly officer to General Hardy.) But as the fighting grew more and more severe, we had to indent for more nurses from Calcutta, and these had to be motored up under aerial convoy.

Sickness broke out too. And we were being so mercilessly harried from the air that the hospitals kept getting it in the neck, no matter how often we shifted them.

The foulest blow dealt us by the rebels was the simultaneous destruction of our Air Force detachments at practically every station. That left them with 300 or 400 machines to play with, and practically no opposition, for after we had provided for convoy we only had about a couple of squadrons, and these were overwhelmed and practically destroyed during the first week of the fighting before Delhi.

The marvel really was that we got up to Tughlakabad at all. Once we got there, of course, the broken country and the extensive ruins of the old city helped us, but from the moment we left Muttra until the arrival of large air reinforcements we never had a moment's peace during the day. In point of fact we hardly ever moved by daylight. We advanced by night, and our halting-places during the day were camouflaged rather cleverly.

Still the enemy planes, ceaselessly swooping round us, took heavy toll of our ranks.

After we had dug ourselves in at Tughlakabad, the attacking wasn't all on their side. On at least two occasions our armoured cars penetrated past the ruins of Raisina as far as the Delhi gate of the old city and gave them a proper peppering. But these were mere flashes in the pan, forlorn hopes; men and machines deliberately thrown away for political reasons. We had to give the rebels to understand that the British lion was growling outside their defences, and that not even their formidable air supremacy could get rid of him.

II.

On my arrival at Muttra, General Hardy had given me a commission and had appointed me to his staff. It was strenuous work, of course, but to be attached to the staff of such a man was a privilege. I naturally saw much of him, and also of the Sultan of Jehanabad. These two commanders met every day regularly, and every two or three days the other princes, and the leading officers of our brigade, were called together. But the General and the Sultan were obviously special friends, and spent as much time as possible together.

It was a gruelling business. We could do little but hold the Tughlakabad-Kutb line, hanging on by our teeth and eyelashes, while the rebels bombed and machine-gunned us from the air, and at the same time organised sorties from Delhi. Sometimes the air would be clear, and just as we were at grips with a push from the town, the planes would come up and attack us in rear. Or we would be cowering behind our ruins and making ourselves as small as possible in order to escape the notice of the fliers—and suddenly we would be attacked on two or more

of our flanks by a mob of rebels in overwhelming strength.

Fortunately they weren't able to use their big guns until nearly the end of the fortnight. If they had got our range before, we should have either had to retreat or be shot to pieces; and I know which alternative General Hardy and the Sultan would have chosen.

But, for some reason which we couldn't fathom at the time, we were spared their heavy stuff for more than ten days. Then they opened, got our range, and immediately began blasting poor old Tughlakabad into a more hopeless ruin than it was when we seized it. That was when we lost an entire hospital shack, its inmates, three nurses, and a surgeon in five minutes. We couldn't have stood much more of it, but fortunately our air reinforcements began to arrive, and in a few days absolutely changed the outlook.

But this is anticipating, and I want to tell my story in chronological sequence. We had three night attacks in the first ten days of our occupancy of Tughlakabad. Have I explained, or haven't I, that Tughlakabad is one of the former Delhis? It had been in ruins for four centuries, but the old fort and town were so massively built that they had easily withstood the ravages of time and the climate, and but for the bombardment would have been as well preserved to-day as they were fifty years ago.

The attacks came at intervals of three or four nights. Each successive attack was more furious than the last, and more and more troops were employed. Why we weren't overwhelmed I don't know, especially on the third and last occasion. One reason possibly was that their Air Force gave us notice of it. When we heard their planes at night we always knew that a sortie was coming, and were ready to receive it. Then, when we were engaged,

down would come their bombers on our backs, and drop their cargo on us. They did a good deal of damage, but nothing in comparison with what they might have done.

Their storming parties came on most determinedly. I had heard the Sultan say on one occasion that without English officers to lead them they would shrink from the bayonet, but he was mistaken—fatally mistaken, poor fellow, as the event showed.

On the third and last occasion the attackers were led in person by the Maharaja of Pindarinagar, their Commander-in-Chief. It seems an extraordinary thing for a Commander-in-Chief to have done, but I suppose Bijli Rao (that was his other name) felt that he had got to squash our defences at all costs. At any rate he led them ; and the result was that they fought like devils. They came in at three places over the old north-east curtain wall of the Fort. General Hardy, who was at the most easterly point when the breach was made, seized a rifle and bayonet from a wounded soldier. There was a furious mêlée, in the course of which I got separated from him for a moment. I was armed with nothing better than a hunting-knife, but at close quarters and with a long reach, believe me, there are worse weapons.

It was a regular mix up. The attackers came over in twos, threes, and dozens, dropping down on top of us and bearing us to earth. There were few shots. It was hand, foot, and bayonet work for the most part. Men gasped, shouted, swore, kicked, and thrust, while the enemy planes droned above us, and fired down on us. I jumped on a heap of squirming bodies, and leaped down to join my General, who had been beaten to his knees.

At that instant I was amazed to see the Sultan suddenly double up from the east, followed by a number of his men, and plunge into the mêlée. His

Highness caught hold of the General and helped him to his feet, only to stagger himself, and fall back against another heap of dead and wounded men.

Hardy sprang in his turn to the Sultan's assistance, and flung his arms round him, regardless of his own danger. He called to him—I could see his lips moving, and his eyes dilated with horror. Before I could get to them a big mutineer clubbed his rifle to kill the General. He himself, however, was felled by a still more enormous figure, a Pathan rebel to look at, who stood before the two commanders, absolutely masking them by his tremendous bulk, and clubbing or bayoneting every mutineer who came within his exceptional reach.

It struck me subconsciously as strange that a rebel should suddenly come to the rescue of the opposite side, but at the moment I was too busy to follow up the train of thought. I used my hunting-knife to good purpose, while our men rallied, and in a few minutes the tide ebbed. Every rebel who had got over or through the wall had been accounted for on our sector, and those on the other side were beating a retreat. Farther to our left the sounds of fighting, the clash of steel on steel, the crackle of musketry, the shouts and the groans still went on, while every now and then an enemy plane swooped low and raked us with machine-gun fire.

As soon as I was able to look round, I saw the General kneeling on one knee, and supporting the Sultan's head on the other. His Highness had obviously been shot through the chest, and was coughing and spitting blood at every laboured breath. His eyes were open and staring, but as he turned them on Hardy he smiled faintly and tried to speak, but could not. Blood gushed from his mouth, and his head dropped back on the General's knee.

Hardy looked wildly round. He seemed distracted with grief.

" Is he dead ? " he asked in a hoarse whisper.

I didn't venture to answer ; but the big Afghan, who was standing by leaning on his rifle, spoke up, to my amazement, in perfect English, with a faint Irish accent.

" I'm afraid he is, sir," he said, " and a gallant gentleman has gone to his Maker."

Hardy lowered his head, and by way of covering his agony, I turned on the stranger abruptly.

" Who the devil are you ? " I asked, " and which side are you fighting on ? "

A pair of very blue eyes, looking strangely out of place in his swarthy face, lit up with amusement.

" I am Michael Macready, Captain in the British Army," he replied. " Until three weeks ago I was Station Staff Officer at Delhi. Since then I have lived in Delhi, but I have never fought for anyone (he said 'annyone') but His Majesty—God bless him."

By this time a little knot of soldiers had gathered round the General, and he rose to his feet.

" Carry the Sultan to my quarters," he ordered, " and send for Major Vincent at once. I can't believe he is dead. Captain Macready, I have to thank you for saving my life. I am John Hardy, Brigadier-General in command of the Calcutta contingent. This—this dear friend of mine was—is—the Sultan of Jehanabad, the finest soldier and gentleman in India."

Macready saluted. " I knew him, General," he said. " And he was all that you say. The Empire has lost in him a splendid prince."

" You must have had an adventurous time in Delhi," said Hardy. " I shall hope to hear your story shortly. In the meantime, we must hurry up the line. Captain Macready, will you accompany

me? That was a close call for all of us. They seem to be falling back. But we must make certain of it."

III.

General Hardy was right. The attack had been withdrawn all along the line, and the aeroplanes tired of peppering us simultaneously. But our side of the wall was a shambles. We had suffered heavily in killed and wounded, both among officers and men. The gallant Crichton, commanding the Caledonians, was among the dead. Hardy heard the news, and his face grew still more stern and sad.

The Sultan's body lay in the shanty which had been rigged up as the General's headquarters; and as soon as he had finished his rounds he went into his room, and remained alone with the dead for several minutes.

Then he came out, his face pale and set, and walked quickly to the hospital, where the entire staff of surgeons and nurses were working against time, and where rows of desperately wounded men awaited their turn to be seen to. The Princess was there, her beautiful face grave but calm, as she went quietly about her work.

As Roshanara saw him her face grew paler, and her eyes dilated. She came towards him with an agonised inquiry in her eyes. He said nothing, but bowed his head. She stood stock-still for a moment, and then hurried off to the senior surgeon. He nodded gravely, and she returned to Hardy. The two walked back to the General's headquarters, and the Princess passed in alone.

IV.

At two in the morning I conducted General Hardy to the 'dug-out'—that is to say, the corner

of the old Tughlakabad fortification screened off by a rough piece of canvas, which had been allotted to Captain Macready. Here, lit by a single hurricane lamp, seated on two blocks of masonry, and wrapped up as warmly as possible, for the night was intensely cold, the two men talked, and Captain Macready gave the General an account of his adventures since the morning of the mutiny in the cantonment. I didn't hear every word then, as I was in attendance a few paces off, but I subsequently heard the whole story from Macready, substantially as follows :—

On grasping the fact that the mutiny had broken out, that the European troops had been ambushed, and that he and the other officers in cantonments, with their families, were completely isolated and deserted by their Indian servants, he had seen red. He went down to the barrack where the butchery of the Suffolks was still going on, and had accounted for several mutineers, when he noticed a derelict motor bike, and had ridden off into New Delhi, carrying a desperately wounded Suffolk private on the handle-bars of his machine.

Leaving the wounded man with a family of Anglo-Indian subordinates who were on the point of motoring towards Agra, he had surprised and killed two mutineers who were looting in Raisina, and by commandeering some of their equipment and darkening his skin, he had been able to make his way into Old Delhi disguised as a mutineer. Speaking both Urdu and Pushtu fluently, he had managed on the whole to avoid giving rise to suspicions. It was not easy, first on account of his uncommon height, and secondly because of his having been well known in the Fort previously as Station Staff Officer. He had actually been recognised, but fortunately the man who spotted him had been well-disposed, and did not betray him.

Macready had passed an irksome fortnight. He did not dare to attach himself to any of the mutinous corps for fear of being detected. He therefore took up the rôle of a military loafer, of whom there were thousands in Delhi, moving about from one obscure corner in the bazaar to another, listening to as much as possible of the casual gossip that went on around him, and discounting it freely.

Warning the General that his impressions required confirmation, he gave it as his opinion that the inevitable dissensions among the rebels had reached an acute phase. There appeared to be two main factions among them—one, the Muslim, led by Prince Mahomed Tughlak, which aspired to place the prince on the throne of his ancestors, and revive the glories of ancient Delhi. The other was led by Sir Bijli Rao, Maharaja of Pindarinagar, who was in reality hostile to the Tughlak faction and its ambitions.

Up to now Bijli Rao, with his wealth, his ability, and the troops at his command, had dominated the rebel councils. He had made himself Commander-in-Chief, and had ruthlessly weeded out any person who had the hardihood to oppose him. But his influence was waning. The three night attacks on the allied forces had really been intended to restore it. In point of fact they had had the opposite effect, and Macready was convinced that the failure of this, the fiercest and the last of them, would bring matters to a crisis in Delhi.

"My own impression is," said Macready, "that there will be no more night attacks. Discipline is lax, and, bedad, they are finding them unhealthy. That is why I seized my chance, and came over this night."

The rebels were well provisioned, he told the General. Local supplies had dried up (ours had not), but the rebels had commissariat officers on

all the railway lines right up to the hills. They were well found both in supplies and ammunition.

"If, General, you had only had an air arm equal to theirs, Delhi would have fallen to you for very little asking. They had 100,000 men here within a week of the mutiny. They have lost at least 35,000 through casualties and desertion."

"Our air inferiority will be a thing of the past in another day or two," replied Hardy. "If only we could have staved off this last raid!"

v.

We buried the Sultan and Colonel Crichton at dawn—not together. The solemn Mohammedan burial service over the dead ruler was held in the open just outside the General's quarters, where the body had lain. A temporary grave had been prepared for him in the stately precincts of the tomb of the murdered Tughlak king. Here Zahir-ud-Din would lie until it was possible to remove his body for State burial in his own capital. The body of Colonel Crichton was buried in the old Fort, within a stone's-throw of where he fell.

The Sultan's was the first Mohammedan funeral I had witnessed, and I was deeply struck by the dignity and solemnity of it. It was specially impressive, because it was attended by thousands of troops, both Indian and European—by every man in the allied army who was not actually engaged on military duty, and who could obtain access to the scene. In the dim light of dawn they stood in long rows, every man armed and ready to take his place in the fighting line at a moment's notice. It was magnificently appropriate to the obsequies of a prince and a soldier.

The prayers were led by the senior Moulvi with the Sultan's forces. They were intoned in sonorous

Arabic, and deep murmuring echoes went up from the crowd. The chief mourner was Colonel Dost Mahomed Khan, a magnificent upstanding warrior with a great black beard, the senior commandant in his late Highness's army. Though obviously stricken with grief—as were all the Sultan's troops,—he and they bore themselves with great dignity.

The ceremonial was simple, and the congregation seemed to take as active a part as the priest. First came, from the Moulvi, that tremendous declaration which never fails, somehow, to move anyone who has ever heard it, and especially when one has grasped its meaning—

"*Allah-ho-akbar*—God is great."

Followed a deep and prolonged antistrophe (the *Subhan*) from the assembly, reciting the holiness, the greatness, and the praise of God. Once again the priest proclaimed his message—"*Allah-ho-akbar*,"—then came from the assembly the *Durud*, or appeal for mercy, which sounded so impressive that I afterwards got it translated as follows:—

"O God, have mercy upon Mohammed and upon his descendants, as Thou didst bestow mercy and peace and blessing and compassion and great kindness upon Ibrahim, and upon his descendants. Thou art praised and Thou art great!"

"*Allah-ho-akbar*," called the Moulvi for the third time.

The third and last antistrophe (the *D'ua*) was now recited by the congregation, followed by the fourth and last *takbir* ("God is great").

The Moulvi blessed the congregation, who now seated themselves on the ground, while the Moulvi, turning to the chief mourner, said, "It is the decree of God."

And the chief mourner murmured in reply, "I am content with the will of God."

All this with a simplicity as dignified as it was solemn.

The bier was now taken up, General Hardy being one of the bearers, and carried, in a vast procession, to the Tughlak tomb. At this point I noticed, walking with the Moulvi, the Scottish chaplain who had accompanied the Caledonians from Calcutta. In the growing light I saw that he was wearing his black gown and bands—just as he had come from the burial of his Colonel.

When the head of the procession reached the graveside, Mr Drummond came forward, and, raising his hand, lifted up his voice in one of those invocations which the Scottish Church has brought to such perfection. It was not spontaneous, of course, but it was simple, eloquent, and manly. Uttered in English, it went straight to the hearts of the few who understood it. Coming after the Arabic prayers, it seemed to unite all, Indians and British, who loved and admired the gallant dead.

I heard afterwards that Mr Drummond had taken part in the funeral at the special request of the Princess Roshanara, who was really a Christian, and had been so for years, although the fact was not publicly known.

The body was committed to the earth with a prayer closely corresponding to that used in the English service. The simple but noble office ended on a triumphant note with the *Fatihah*, or hymn of praise.

The congregation dispersed. The military units re-formed and marched back to their stations, and I followed General Hardy back to his quarters in the bright morning light. He walked slowly, his head bowed, and his whole attitude that of a man who finds it difficult to throw off a great sorrow.

Suddenly he stopped and turned to me.

" What is that ? " he asked, his face lighting up.

" Enemy aeroplanes, sir," I replied, " coming over earlier than usual to give us our morning *strafe*."

" No, Montgomery," he cried, looking up eagerly, " these are British. It means relief at last ! "

Ten minutes later landed in our lines the first machine of three British squadrons, complete with air freighters and equipment, and headed by Air-Marshal Sir Bryan Neville, the new Commander-in-Chief.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO.

I.

THINGS were worse with the rebels than Captain Macready had given General Hardy to suppose. The factions which inevitably arise where the whole situation rests upon a violent disturbance of authority were emphasised by the temperaments and ambitions of their respective leaders.

Bijli Rao of Pindarinagar had been infuriated to find himself saddled with a species of King Stork, when he had hoped to have only a King Log to deal with. In other words, Prince Mahomed Tughlak, ponderous and slow-witted where things to do with the general interest were concerned, was proving himself shrewd and determined enough in his own interests. In the course of a few days he had set on foot a formidable propaganda looking to his own proclamation as Emperor. He held daily audiences in the *Dewan-i-am*, and promised everything to everybody on one single condition, which was that he should be restored to the throne of his ancestors.

At the same time the prestige and influence of the Mahratta Commander-in-Chief were being cleverly undermined. His oppressive methods had procured him the hatred of many, while the high-handed manner in which he had seized upon the chief command was resented by a distinct majority in the Council.

Bijli Rao was quick to divine the general hostility. When he could, he put down criticism with a heavy hand, but these measures only drove it deeper and made it more venomous. Then, against the advice of Rash Bihari, he had asserted himself by endeavour-

ing to crush, in a night attack, the allied army which had appeared on the Kutb-Tughlakabad line. His failure to do so reacted to his own detriment, and induced him to repeat the performance, with equally unsatisfactory results.

The Tughlak faction made no secret of their pleasure at these set-backs. If they had been agents of the English, Bijli Rao remarked bitterly to Rash Bihari, they could not have shown greater satisfaction.

Rash Bihari gave him cold comfort.

"Your Highness has only yourself to blame," he pointed out. "You are cutting not only your own throat, but the throats of all of us by this squandering of our resources. Harry the enemy as much as you like from the air, but do realise that the British behind defences are unbeatable. You will never take Tughlakabad by assault."

"Won't I?" answered Bijli Rao, and set his teeth. Rendered more obstinate than ever by defeat and opposition, he determined on a third assault, knowing that if this failed he would not be able to induce his followers to make any further attempt.

He led the attack himself; and drink and bhang served out to the Hindus, of whom the storm troops were entirely composed, raised their tempers to the point of reckless savagery which was essential to his purpose. Dissensions were so acute, and discipline had once more become so relaxed, that no Mohammedans and very few airmen took part in the assault.

Scorning any more elaborate preparation than a barrage of light artillery, Bijli Rao launched his Mahrattas and Pandies at three breaches in the north wall of Tughlakabad, and rushed the centre breach at the head of his Pindarinagar storming party, whose fiendish yells rose high above the din

of musketry, artillery, and aeroplane. The breach was covered by machine-guns. Bijli Rao, with Chittoo and a hundred maddened Mahrattas, threw themselves at it, their eyes bloodshot and furious, their voices raucous with the hellish slogan, "*Kali Mai ki Jai!*"

The Caledonians behind the breach held their fire until the attackers were struggling through it. Then the machine-guns spoke, and in a moment the gap was heaped with dead and dying fanatics. In another moment it was practically closed by their bodies. No matter! The others climbed up over them, and Bijli Rao, mounting by this ghastly staircase to the crown of the wall, was about to leap down inside, when a ricochetting bullet grazed his forehead, searing the flesh until it hung over his eyes, and he toppled back into Chittoo's arms, stunned, blinded, and *hors de combat.*

The trifling wound sustained by their leader lost the battle so far as the rebels were concerned. Two or three dozen climbed the wall as he had done, and dropped down upon the other side, only to be shot or bayoneted as they came. The rest bore back with their Maharaja. The word passed along the line that the 'Lightning Prince' was slain. The other breaches were closed; the devilish echoes of "*Kali Mai ki Jai*" died away. The last and fiercest of Bijli Rao's assaults had failed more utterly than the first and second. And the Maharaja, when he came to himself and realised the collapse of his hopes, cursed the marksman who had failed to kill him. Had he known that Colonel Crichton had fallen dead almost at the instant when he himself was stricken down, he would gladly have changed places with the Scottish warrior.

II.

After this third fiasco the Mahratta chief's power and dominance in Delhi were broken irretrievably, and Bijli Rao's enemies now began to bestir themselves in earnest. They proceeded cautiously, still having a wholesome dread of his energy and ability, and fearing to precipitate a state of civil war in Delhi itself.

Their first step was to proclaim Prince Mahomed Tughlak Emperor. The decision was taken at a special meeting of the Council held at the *Dewan-i-khas* the day after the third abortive raid on Tughlakabad, and it was taken in the absence of the Maharaja of Pindarinagar.

The resolution to proclaim the new Emperor was passed unanimously; the accession of Padshah Mahomed Tughlak was proclaimed by beat of drum throughout Delhi, and a 'Court Gazette' was launched forthwith. The first issue of the new periodical was entirely occupied by a recital of the numerous titles of the Grand Mogul, turgid acknowledgments of the divine aid, and a proclamation to his faithful subjects and the world at large.

This document was both bombastic and humorous. It declared His Imperial Majesty's intention of ruling benevolently, but of maintaining the law of Islam unflinchingly. At the same time, and with a complete disregard for consistency, it promised full liberty, religious and otherwise, to his Hindu subjects. It proclaimed a general amnesty for all offences against foreigners, and the remission of all taxes, "except those necessary for carrying on the war." As there were no other taxes at the moment, and as the war tax actually levied meant relieving the citizens of Delhi of nearly everything they possessed, the concession amounted to exactly

nothing; but Mahomed Tughlak was genuinely convinced that he had proved himself to be the most enlightened sovereign that had arisen since Akbar.

He held his first durbar the same day in the *Dewan-i-am*. Seated on the largest and most heavily upholstered chair to be found in Delhi, he heard petitions and promised redress. Left to himself he would have dismissed Bijli Rao at once from the chief command, and would have got rid of him altogether in the summary manner beloved of his Tughlak ancestors; but his supporters restrained him. They hoped Bijli Rao's fiery temper would save them the trouble of removing him from the command; that he would resign upon learning that his rival had seized the imperial title. But they judged him, forgetting the Mahratta character.

True, Bijli Rao gave way to paroxysms of rage on learning of the march which had been stolen upon him. But, true to his Mahratta character, he refused to cut off his nose to spite his face. He could play a waiting game. As Commander-in-Chief he still had privileges and powers which it did not suit him at the moment to dispense with. He retained his office, to the discomfiture of his enemies, and even sent a loyal message to the so-called Emperor. He apologised for not coming in person to offer homage, but explained that he had received severe injuries in His Majesty's service, and was confined to his house. As soon as the state of his health permitted, he would hasten to pay his respects to the new sovereign.

Neither Mahomed Tughlak nor his supporters were deceived by these professions. They were, in fact, disconcerted by the Mahratta prince's complaisancy. They rightly felt that it boded ill for them; but, having lost the opportunity of dismissing him, they were doubtful as to their next step.

III.

Matters, however, were no longer in their hands to dispose of. The accession of Mahomed Tughlak coincided with a sudden change for the worse in the military situation. The local air supremacy which the rebels had enjoyed ever since the beginning of the mutiny was now seriously threatened. An important air reinforcement had reached the Allies on the very morning after the failure of the third attack on Tughlakabad. Those first three air squadrons had been followed by four more the next day, and soon it became known that they were under the command of Sir Bryan Neville, the most formidable air leader in Europe.

Disaster now followed disaster in the air. The rebel machines were speedily deprived of the mastery. They were out-manœuvred and out-fought. So far from being in a position to attack, they were unable to put up even a feeble defence. More and more British squadrons arrived. The sky was dark with their wings, and the air vibrant with their engines. They laughed at the anti-aircraft equipment of the rebels, and in the course of three or four days reduced them, at first by sheer destruction of their machines and personnel, and then by an absolute moral ascendancy, to complete impotence. The rebel air arm was earthbound. The monopoly of the air had been restored to the British as suddenly as it had been lost.

The attacking air force now proceeded to exact toll of the rebel city; and at the same time the small allied army holding the line between Tughlakabad and the Kutb, reinforced by infantry and artillery motored up from Bombay, began to throw a cordon round it. Delhi was battered by high explosives from the British entrenchments as well

as by gas-bombs and other projectiles from the air.

The city was well provided with underground shelters. These had been deepened and increased during the three or four weeks which had elapsed since the mutiny began ; but three days of such an inferno as now descended upon it were too much for the rebel *moral*. Deserters began to quit the old city, and a stream of refugees poured out by night as well as by day.

Rockets and shells lit up the whole area by night, and British patrols spotted the fugitives from the air. Although encirclement of the vast perimeter was not complete, detachments were thrown across all the routes of egress, and prisoners were swept up by the thousand.

IV.

Eventually Bijli Rao handed in his resignation of the chief command. He resigned at what was destined to be the last council of war held under the barrack in the Fort. The four-days-old Emperor presided, looking haggard and, for him, almost thin, and the few remaining leaders who had summoned up the courage to attend were even more woe-begone. Rash Bihari Das, Seraj-ud-dowlah, and Chittoo Bhunj Rao were present. Rash Bihari looked as if he had been turned into stone. Seraj-ud-dowlah, from the way in which he kept fingering the collar of his tunic, as though it were too tight, seemed to feel the rope already round his neck. Bijli Rao had had his forehead sewn up, and wore a bandage over one eye. He and Chittoo, his hench-man, seemed the least concerned of all those present. They had already decided upon their course, and had determined to seek refuge in Bokharistan.

Mahomed Tughlak Shah opened the proceedings

with his customary pompous brevity. They could not, he said, sustain the British bombardment any longer, and the only question was whether they should endeavour to fight their way out, or surrender on the best terms they could get.

Bijli Rao at once pointed out, in his most cynical manner, that the only terms they could expect were a choice between shooting and hanging.

"Personally," he said, "I am in favour of a sortie in force. Most of us, it is true, will perish, but those who survive will have a better chance of being treated decently than if we tamely give in. We really have no choice. I am prepared to lead the sortie."

"His Highness is right," pointed out Rash Bihari, with the calmness of despair. "The atrocities which we have permitted have shut the door of amnesty in our faces. If my advice had been taken we might have surrendered on terms. Now we surrender with ropes round our necks. It is better to die with arms in our hands."

The talk of death was obviously very distasteful to Mahomed Tughlak Shah.

"I would point out," he said, "that we are able to make a very important condition. We are not rebels. We have a crowned head, and therefore occupy a status of equality with the enemy. As Emperor I am certainly in a position to negotiate."

"In that case," said Bijli Rao maliciously, "Your Majesty will doubtless do us the favour to head the deputation for the discussion of terms?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the outraged Mogul. "No Emperor could possibly descend to that. I suggest that you, as our ablest and most influential leader, should take charge of the negotiations."

"That, sire, is equally impossible," retorted Bijli Rao. "I have stated my opinion as to what

we ought to do. Nothing will induce me to agree to negotiations or surrender."

Bijli Rao, Rash Bihari, and Chittoo Bhunj Rao were, however, the only ones to raise their voices in favour of the more daring plan. The rest voted for the opening of negotiations, and for an unconditional surrender if no better terms could be obtained.

The Mahratta looked round upon his cowed and beaten associates with a grim smile. He knew exactly what was passing in their minds. Each of them hoped to escape the vengeance of the British by denouncing the others, especially himself, as the author of the outrages. His smile had a double edge. It registered his amusement at their cowardice and treachery, and also triumph at their approaching discomfiture.

He rose in his place and saluted His Imperial Majesty.

"As the Council has decided to open futile negotiations with the enemy," he said, "I beg to resign my command, and I wash my hands of the consequences of the mad and hopeless policy of surrender. I refuse to be associated with it, or, gentlemen, with you and the Emperor you have chosen. I now resume full liberty of action."

He turned and left the room without another word, accompanied by Chittoo Bhunj Rao, who did not trouble himself to tender any formal resignation.

When the door had closed behind them the Council eyed each other at first in consternation and perplexity; and then all, except Rash Bihari Das, breathed a sigh of relief.

v.

The two Mahrattas made their way swiftly to Bijli Rao's sumptuous 16-cylinder Mereweather, which was waiting under the Delhi Gate, and were

driven in the space of little more than five minutes to the Maharaja's palace in New Delhi. This was by no means intact. As has been mentioned, it was one of the few houses left standing when the rebels treated New Delhi generally to repeated doses of high explosive during the first two days of the mutiny. It had, therefore, offered a mark to the British airmen when these had begun to devote their attention to the rebel position, and they had knocked it about considerably.

But safe in a bomb-proof subterranean chamber entered by a sloping runway, with a view to some such emergency, lay the Maharaja's Fox superplane—a thing as sumptuous as his car, with a suite of luxurious apartments in miniature. It had a range of 3500 miles, and was well stocked with petrol.

Bijli Rao's pilot and two mechanics were all Mahrattas, armed to the teeth, and devoted to their chief. It was between seven and eight in the evening. The broad road on which the palace stood was perfectly dark and deserted. A fitful long range bombardment was going on, and British planes were hovering on the horizon. Risks, however, had to be taken. The Fox had a small safe, and into this the Maharaja stuffed money and jewels to the value of several lakhs of rupees. He could have made it several crores, but as he was about to trust himself to the tender mercies of the Bokharistanis, he felt that it would be better to be comparatively poor and to remain alive than to go to them burdened with riches and be murdered, to a certainty, out of hand. Ten lakhs meant practical beggary to him, but it was hardly sufficient to induce his amiable hosts-to-be to cut his throat.

So, hoping for the best, the five Mahrattas boarded the Fox, which taxied on to the road, and after a short run took the air. The pilot wanted to go

due north at 5000 feet, but Bijli Rao made him climb to 10,000 and to take him, as nearly as could be gauged in the dark, over the Fort.

On gaining the desired position he produced a Thring bomb—the latest type of infernal machine, combining the most deadly explosive qualities with the most perfect portability—and dropped it over the side.

"A farewell salute for our dear friends, the Emperor and his court," he shouted, as he gave the northward signal to the pilot.

The little party gazed downwards to see what results, if any, would follow upon the Maharaja's action.

After watching for what seemed to be a long time they were rewarded by an explosion out of all proportion to the means which had brought it about. The earth appeared to open beneath them —a yawning crater all on fire, from which the flames leaped up and reached out on every side. The roaring of their engines deadened the detonation, but in the dreadful glow what looked like rocks or pieces of masonry could be seen hurtling through the air. They rushed northward with all possible speed; even so, the vibrations set up caused the plane to rock.

For several minutes they held on their course in a silence broken only by the clamour of the engines, their eyes fixed on the weird spectacle below and behind them. A large part of Delhi appeared to be in flames.

"What has happened?" shrieked Bijli Rao in the ear of Chittoo when the burning and even the glow had been left behind them.

"Maharaja Sahib," was the hoarse reply, "you hit the dump by the Jumma Musjid, and it and the Fort have both been blown sky-high."

This was the truth so far as the Jumma Musjid

was concerned, as the whole world was soon to know. The vengeful Mahratta had struck his enemies a blow even more terrible than he had intended. As Rash Bihari had foreseen, the attacking British planes had carefully avoided exploding the great dump before the Jumma Musjid. They had been forbidden to do so for reasons political, æsthetic, and sentimental. The Jumma Musjid stood alone among the many glorious mosques in the East. Its noble simplicity, its magnificent proportions, the harmonies brought out by means of its three building materials—red sandstone and black and white marble—combined to make it, next to the Taj Mahal at Agra, the most splendid architectural legacy of the Emperor Shah Jehan. The Mahratta's bomb had detonated the dump, and in a few minutes the masterpiece which had delighted the world for three centuries had been riven asunder and destroyed. One of its cupolas was carried several hundred yards and crashed into the bazaar, killing and maiming hundreds of people. Its minarets toppled in ruin upon the great tesselated square. Its walls shot out and collapsed. Where the Jumma Musjid had been was a gigantic rubble heap, beneath which lay the dead bodies of those who had been in the immediate vicinity when the bomb fell.

The force of the explosion wrecked every building within a quarter of a mile, and tore down part of the wall of the Fort. It shook the barrack to its foundations, and caused the rebel conclave to break up in dismay.

The tremendous repercussions were felt throughout the British lines, and the cause of them at once occurred to everyone who had seen the giant dump from the air.

Divining what had happened, Rash Bihari rushed out of the Fort; and when he saw the burning

buildings, the smoke and dust of the explosion, the hideous ruin which had once been the centre of the city; when he heard the groans of agony and the shrieks of terror which went up from the injured and from the demented populace, he felt that he could endure no more. He placed the muzzle of his automatic to his right temple and put an end to his life.

Meanwhile Bijli Rao and his confederates flew northwards, chuckling at the felon blow which they had struck at their late associates and at the same time congratulating themselves on having saddled the British (as they hoped) with the odium of having destroyed the great Musjid.

In this hope they were disappointed. Bijli Rao was known to have a Fox super-plane; and his disappearance with Chittoo by air immediately after his retirement from the Council was also known. Putting two and two together, the Mohammedan faction in Delhi had no hesitation in fastening the blame for the disaster upon the treacherous Mahratta, whom they hated much more than the British.

Nemesis literally leaped upon Bijli Rao and his confederate. Bokharistan was a State in which Mohammedanism was the universal, not to say fanatical, belief. The news of their exploit followed them next day to Allakand, the capital to which they had fled for safety, and a raging mob broke into the house which they had hired and tore them in pieces. The Bokharistan Government then quietly appropriated the ten lakhs which Bijli Rao had hoped to be allowed to keep by reason of the insignificance of the sum! The Mahratta chieftain was always too clever by half; but of all the blunders into which his vindictive temper had betrayed him, the most obvious and the most fatal was to blow up the most famous mosque in

the world as a preliminary to forcing himself as a guest upon the most fanatically Mohammedan people in the world.

The immediate effect of his Parthian shot, however, was to knock the last ounce of courage out of the rebel council in Delhi. They scrapped the representation they had drawn up with a view to negotiating for terms, and resolved upon unconditional surrender.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE.

I.

"GENTLEMEN," said His Excellency Air-Marshal Sir Bryan Neville, "Delhi is ours at last. The rebels have surrendered at discretion. Their leaders are in our camp, and have placed themselves entirely at my disposal. Strictly speaking, of course, I ought to hang the lot, but I expect there are degrees of guilt, and also the Home Government have specially requested me to show as much clemency as possible. I have, therefore, called you gentlemen together in order to gather your opinions before receiving the rebel deputation and handing them our terms."

These remarks were addressed to half a dozen officers who were seated at a rough table at Sir Bryan Neville's headquarters by the Kutb Minar. They included General Hardy, commanding the Calcutta brigade; the Maharaja of Rajwarra, who had succeeded the Sultan of Jehanabad in command of the Princes' contingent; Lieut.-General Sir William Smyth, commanding the British land forces; Air Vice-Marshal Ellam, Sir Bryan Neville's Chief of the Staff; and Captain Michael Macready; with an A.D.C. in attendance.

John Hardy, looking at and listening to Air-Marshal Neville attentively, was well able, after a few days' acquaintance with him, to understand the antipathy which the dead Sultan had entertained for him. He was a peculiar-looking man—tall, dark, with a long horse-like face, a scraggy neck, and a large quantity of long black hair which was brushed back from a high narrow forehead. He had lack-lustre, greenish-grey eyes, a long nose,

and a slightly cruel mouth, insufficiently hidden by a ragged black moustache. His speech was thick, his voice thin, and his manner undistinguished. There was little that was attractive about his appearance.

Nevertheless he was a most able, daring, and successful air fighter. He was a born mechanic, and his natural ability, combined with intensive study, had given him complete mastery over the technique of his profession. But his outlook was not confined to mere air strategy or tactics. He had studied the art of war with the thoroughness of a Clausewitz, and he had had opportunities of applying the results of his study with marked success. The Air Force had been recognised for years as the most important branch of the Army, in Great Britain as in other countries, and the Indian chief command had long been held by an officer of that force. So brilliant an airman and strategist as Sir Bryan Neville was marked out for the highest preferment ; and on the chief command in India falling vacant on the outbreak of the mutiny he had been appointed to the post with general acclamation.

But this gifted man had a weakness which not only made him unpopular, but was a serious handicap to him as a commander. He was as egocentric as Napoleon, without any of the charm which enabled that supreme egoist to conceal his selfishness and win the co-operation of others. Neville was an uncouth figure whose self-esteem was supremely obvious. He was so wrapped in the contemplation of his own merits that the eye which he turned upon those of others was nearly always blind. He never saw—at all events, he never acknowledged—the least merit in anyone but himself. Hundreds of thousands went to death gladly for Napoleon. There was only one person who would have died for Bryan Neville, and that was

himself. His conversation was remarkable. It was a kind of monologue, with himself for audience and chorus.

To sum up, he was by no means a bad fellow, and his worst enemies could not deny his great ability ; but no one, even of his friends, could be induced to join the Neville Admiration Society, of which he was founder, president, and sole surviving member.

The council of war had been called at nine o'clock in the morning of the day following the flight of Bijli Rao and the destruction of the great mosque. The rebel chiefs had signalled for an armistice, and had come into the allied camp an hour earlier. They had not yet seen the Commander-in-Chief, but had submitted to him a brief and formal note of surrender without terms or qualification.

The main British objective had thus been gained. The surrender of Delhi was a resounding admission that British supremacy was intact. There were still numbers of armed rebels scattered over Northern India, some of them in considerable force. But these could be dealt with more or less at leisure. The first thing needful had been to recover Delhi ; and this had now been done. Sir Bryan Neville would tell the Home Government that he had done it ; and he would have some justification for the claim.

But from the moment when the rebel leaders threw up the sponge the problem had ceased to be a purely military one. Diplomacy had to be called in. Air-Marshal Neville was shrewd enough to be sensible of his own want of knowledge of the country, and of the personalities and conditions with which he had to deal. India had once more been saved by the sword, but it could not be retained thus. In other words, Sir Bryan Neville wanted advice before summoning the rebel leaders before him. At the same time he did not want to admit that he

wanted it. He loved to hear his own voice, and talked on until he had persuaded himself, and, he vaguely hoped, his auditors, that he had only summoned them out of courtesy to his colleagues, and not mainly in his own interests.

II.

"First and foremost, let me say," continued Sir Bryan Neville, "that there are certain men—about a dozen all told—with regard to whom I am not prepared to consider any question of amnesty. I have reason to believe that these men have been the chief fomentors of the military revolt and the chief organisers of the rebellion."

He referred to a list which Macready had given him the previous day, and read out several names from it, mispronouncing most of them so badly that his hearers had some difficulty in making out whom he meant. The list included—

Maharaja Bahadur Sir Bijli Rao, Maharaja of Pindarinagar.
Lieut.-Colonel Rash Bihari Das, R.E. (retired).
Sirdar Seraj-ud-dowlah.
General Chittoo Bhunj Rao.
Brig.-General Jai Pal Singh.
Colonel Mubarik Hossein.
Captain Sikunder Khan.

Here the Commander-in-Chief began to get so tied up with unfamiliar names that he read out no more, but briefly explained that the first four were those of the men who had planned and organised the revolt, and the remainder were regular officers of the Indian Army, who were largely responsible for the mutiny.

"I propose, gentlemen," observed His Excellency,

" to demand the surrender of these men immediately, and to execute them summarily. The time has come to teach the disaffected elements a lesson, and to make India feel that if we have refrained from asserting our strength it is not because we have not the power to do so, but simply because of our humanity.

" There are other men concerned in the rebellion whom it will perhaps be advisable to treat with greater leniency. There is, for example, the absurd person who was elected Emperor the other day—just before I and my squadrons came upon the scene—Prince Mahomed Tughlak, I think he is called. It is obviously impossible to treat such a person seriously. My view is that we should let him live, but keep him in confinement for the rest of his life. There are other figures—Maharaja Jeswunt Singh, Nawab Ibrahim Mahomed, and others—who come into an intermediate category. Some of these we may execute and some we may punish less severely.

" Again, there are thousands of subordinate officers and common soldiers whose hands are red with the blood of English people, including women and children. These, of course, will be specifically excluded from pardon, and will be dealt with as the survivors may help us to identify them. Captain Macready, for example, who saw a number of outrages with his own eyes, will be able to give us most useful information on these points."

This was His Excellency's first and only reference to Macready, although he owed entirely to him his information with regard to the situation in Delhi and his list of names. Macready's face became almost as red as his hair.

The Commander-in-Chief droned on.

" As to the rebels, who are now slipping away from Delhi, and will presently be scattered all

over the country, these must receive short shrift. Every Indian must be disarmed; any Indian found carrying arms within a month from now must be put to death. There must be no compromise on this point. But once the country has been disarmed and pacified, I am disposed to a policy of clemency. Indeed, I have received instructions from the Prime Minister himself to that effect.

"I have every hope that we shall be able to clean up the military situation in a month or two; and then it will be our task to take in hand the rebuilding of those towns and stations that have been so grievously shattered by the revolt. It will, I think, be natural and proper that we should take in hand the reconstruction of Delhi at the earliest possible moment.

"These, gentlemen, are my views on the situation which confronts us. I have arrived at them after careful consideration, and have no intention of altering them lightly. But as you have given me your assistance in reducing Delhi to surrender, I have deemed it advisable to ascertain your views on the subject."

His Excellency looked from one face to another, as though waiting for applause which never came, and finally turned to Hardy. His attitude towards the civilian General had been marked by all the contempt which the professional soldier entertains, and often voices, for the amateur. He keenly resented the prominence which Hardy had attained, and lost no opportunity of sneering at him and his contingent, although it might have occurred to him that, but for the work done by the small allied force during the first three weeks of the rebellion, his own task might not have proved so easy as it actually turned out to be.

"General Hardy," said Sir Bryan Neville, with

a kind of sneering simper, "you have taken a leading part throughout this war—indeed, I believe history will credit you with having begun it,—and as you are able to view things from a civilian as well as a military standpoint, I should like to draw upon your experience of the country and the people. Do you not agree with me that reconstruction should go hand in hand with punishment?"

III.

John Hardy was familiar with the Commander-in-Chief's sentiments towards himself, and he was supremely indifferent to them. He admired Sir Bryan Neville's abilities; he was perfectly willing to accord him all the credit he deserved for the reduction of Delhi. His only regret was that a man so able should also be so small-minded. But that, after all, was a matter for Sir Bryan Neville, and not for him.

Hardy knew that what he was about to say would come as a shock not only to the Commander-in-Chief, but to all the other officers in the room. But he also had considered the situation carefully, and had come to definite conclusions, which he now proceeded to lay before the meeting.

"Your Excellency," he said, "I am greatly obliged to you for giving me an opportunity of putting my opinion before you, since the situation, as you have described it, calls for the display of both firmness and conciliation—firmness, because our authority has been rudely challenged, and conciliation, because we Britishers whose work lies in India have to live and work with the people of this country. So far we have secured their co-operation. We must continue to secure it; otherwise we must quit.

"With your remarks on the punishment of

those who have deliberately plotted the downfall of British rule, and who have shed British blood by way of massacre and outrage, I am most cordially in agreement. They must be punished with death. But I also agree that their tools and victims should be treated more leniently, especially because there is a very large element in this country which is sincerely attached to the British Raj, and would be sorry to see it destroyed."

Then Hardy attacked the subject which lay nearest his heart. "Your Excellency has said," he continued, "that reconstruction must go hand in hand with punishment, and has suggested that the work of reconstruction should begin with the capital of Delhi. There I disagree with you most emphatically. No greater mistake could be made than the restoration of Delhi to the position it held before the mutiny broke out.

"In my opinion Delhi stands condemned as the capital of India. It stands condemned as a capital at all. Delhi is not a capital; it is a battleground, a graveyard. The scenes which it has witnessed during the past few weeks are simply a repetition of scenes which have been enacted round Delhi ever since history began. Look at the ruins of the dozen Delhis that have preceded this one. Look at the ruins of the present Delhi. That sums up the history of Delhi. It is a centre of ruin and desolation, not a city which should be rebuilt as the capital of the British Empire in India.

"British power rests upon the sea, and that is why the founders of the Empire established their capital at Calcutta, one of the great ports of the world, ensconced in the upper reaches of a river which no stranger can navigate with safety. I have been told by those who were in India at the time that when the capital was suddenly shifted to Delhi without rhyme or reason, a wave of super-

stitious dread ran through the country—why? Because the name of Delhi is ominous, because no dynasty which has made it the capital has endured much more than a hundred years. And the peoples of India, most of whom, as I have said, would rather have British rule than any other, were panic-stricken because they feared that the transfer of the capital to Delhi meant the downfall of the British Empire."

There was a pause. Sir Bryan Neville was evidently impressed, but was reluctant to be convinced.

"What, Maharaja Sahib, is your opinion of General Hardy's theory?" he said, turning to the Maharaja of Rajwarra.

"My opinion, sir," replied the prince, "is that the General is right when he says that Delhi is a name of ill-omen. I was only a child when the seat of Government was transferred to it, but I remember the horror expressed by all those with whom I came in contact."

"Have you heard of this superstition about Delhi, Captain Macready?" asked His Excellency.

"Bedad, sir, I have," was the reply. "And by the same token, I have never known the Government do any good at Delhi ever since I came to the country."

The Commander-in-Chief looked at Sir William Smyth.

"I was out here on the staff ten years ago," said the General, "and I am bound to say that everybody loathed the place at that time. It was riotous, unhealthy, seditious, and in every way undesirable. The only thing which made it possible as the seat of Government was that Government was so seldom there."

"What, then, do you suggest should be done to Delhi, General Hardy?" sneered His Excellency.

"Should we raze it to the ground, and sow the site with salt?"

"My plan would be less drastic than that," answered Hardy. "As regards razing it to the ground, that has more or less been done already. Our bombardment has pretty nearly wrecked Old Delhi; the rebels when the mutiny broke out reduced New Delhi to a rubbish heap. All I would suggest is that we leave both cities—both Old and New Delhi—exactly as they are. Let them be added to the nine or ten defunct cities whose ruins and tombs extend for miles around us in every direction.

"But," and here his calm voice took on a rasp which gave the Commander-in-Chief a start, "I would march in triumph into Delhi to-morrow only to reassert British supremacy. I would seize the occasion to proclaim that it has become unfit to be the capital of India, and that the capital should be removed elsewhere. I would add that Delhi should cease to have any municipal government or privileges, and I would shift the railway junction to a more convenient site."

"And where, General, would you establish the seat of the Government of India?" asked the Commander-in-Chief. He spoke with an affectation of cynicism, but in a tone of greater respect. He thought he saw his way to making use of Hardy's idea.

"Personally, I would keep it in Calcutta, where it now is," replied Hardy. "But Bombay, or even Madras, would be better than Delhi."

IV.

Sir Bryan Neville liked to think that the rapidity with which he made up his mind to adopt General Hardy's proposal with regard to Delhi was an illustration of his unerring judgment, and his power

of quick decision. His enemies — and they were legion—would have ascribed it to his egoism, and his constitutional inability to give credit to anyone but himself.

Whatever may have been his motive, he had become a convert to the abandonment of Delhi even while Hardy was speaking; but he gave not the slightest indication of this change of view. He switched the conversation almost immediately on to the subject of the rebel deputation, and in a few minutes sent word to them to present themselves before him.

The conference had taken place in the verandah of the dâk bungalow, which was the headquarters of the chief command. The rebel deputation, consisting of three Mohammedan and three Hindu notables, escorted by a British guard, and looking the most wretched men in India that day, came slowly to the verandah steps, at the top of which stood Sir Bryan Neville, surrounded by the group of officers who had assisted at the conference.

The Commander-in-Chief had dignity. His long face was solemn and expressionless as the deputation approached. Four of them were in English morning dress, and two wore Indian costume with puggarees. The first four raised their hats; the remaining two salaamed profoundly, but the victor made no response.

There was a painful pause, broken by the voice of the leader of the deputation—Maharaja Jeswunt Singh,—who first introduced himself, and then the other members of the delegation. At the conclusion of this ceremony His Excellency briefly read out the terms on which the surrender would take place, including the immediate disarmament of the rebel troops and of all the inhabitants; the evacuation of the city by the rebel garrison, and its confinement in barbed wire enclosures which were then being

put up amid the ruins of New Delhi ; and the immediate surrender for summary punishment of the principal heads of the revolt, beginning with Maharaja Sir Bijli Rao of Pindarinagar.

The faces of the deputation were a study in consternation.

" Your Excellency ! " cried Jeswunt Singh, " most, if not all of these men have fled. They cannot be produced for punishment."

" That, gentlemen, would be extremely unfortunate for you," replied Sir Bryan Neville. " His Majesty's Government is not vindictive, but plainly it must punish for the crimes that have taken place ; and if the men whom it regards as primarily responsible cannot be produced, I am afraid it will have to fall back upon those whom it might otherwise have spared. In fact, gentlemen, it will hold Prince Mahomed Tughlak and yourselves, together with the entire population of Delhi, answerable for the appearance of these miscreants, alive or dead."

He put an end to the interview with a wave of his hand, and turned his back upon the deputation. The crestfallen rebel leaders withdrew with an air of even deeper dejection than they had come with ; but the effect of the ultimatum was remarkable. With the exception of Bijli Rao and Chittoo, who by that time were lodged in the capital of Bokharistan, the whole of the ringleaders, including Serajud-dowlah, were rounded up by nightfall and delivered over to the British ; and at daybreak next morning every one of them paid the extreme penalty for his crimes.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR.

I.

Neither John Hardy nor Sir Bryan Neville had any reason to be dissatisfied with the sensational announcement which the Commander-in-Chief made next day from under the shadow of the old Fort in Delhi, after he had marched his army in triumph through the surrendered city. The audience was not what Sir Bryan Neville would have chosen if there had been more time to stage-manage the film. It consisted of British and loyal Imperial Service troops, volunteers, and several thousand Indian citizens who were trembling for their necks. But the wireless was working, and the speech was picked up over the greater part of Europe and America. It created almost as great a sensation as the surrender of Delhi itself. Special editions came out, and late at night Sir Bryan Neville had the gratification of hearing, on the loud speaker, some of the newspaper and other comments on his oration. While they were not quite unanimous as to its excellence—a fact which disappointed him slightly—they all agreed that it was ' epoch-making.'

Throughout the greater part of the previous day the Commander-in-Chief, who had become an almost fanatical exponent of the desirability of abandoning Delhi, had been in wireless communication with London and Calcutta on the subject. He had found the Viceroy a willing convert to the plan, nor had Whitehall been very difficult to convince. Its main objection was the money that had been laid out. Fifty millions, it pointed out, had been spent in the creation of New Delhi, and

it would be extravagant to abandon the results of such an expenditure.

Sir Bryan Neville, in reply, assured Whitehall that the results of the expenditure had been wiped out already. The rebel high explosives had been so effective that none of the public buildings was recognisable. The new capital was a mass of ruins, and it would cost as much to clear the site and rebuild as had been expended originally.

Then he plied the Home Government with all the arguments which he had learned from Hardy the previous day (although the Calcutta general's name was never whispered)—the ill-omens associated with Delhi, its unsuitability as a British capital, the superstitions which clung to it, the opportunity afforded by the rebellion of retracing the disastrous step which had been taken forty years before, and, finally, his own overwhelming conviction that much of the benefit of the quelling of the mutiny would be lost if any attempt were made to restore Delhi as the capital of India.

Whitehall and Downing Street had capitulated by the evening, and had agreed to the announcement being made next day that Delhi should no longer be the winter capital of India. From this it followed, almost without discussion, that the Government of India should return to Calcutta.

II.

On the morning of the day on which the British army made its formal entry into Delhi, John Hardy assisted in the removal of their wounded from the field hospital to one of the largest undamaged buildings in the city. He had hardly seen Roshanara since the tragic night when he had conducted her to where the Sultan lay dead in his own tent. He had left her alone with her dead; and when

she had come out again, her face tragic and tearless, he had escorted her back to the hospital. The words that had passed between them had been few. When she saw him standing, pale, blood-stained, and dishevelled at the door of the ward, she had divined the truth; and as she went out with him she had murmured—

"Is he dead?"

And his reply, spoken with quivering lips, had been "Yes."

After that, silence. She had taken his arm on the way back to the hospital, and he had almost wished that someone would give him an excuse for killing him in her defence.

As he parted from her at the hospital he had bowed low and kissed her hand fervently.

"Princess," he had said, "if there is anything in the world that I can do for you, let me know. I have no other thought than to serve you. And I loved your noble brother as though he were my own."

He had raised himself, and had ventured to look into her eyes. They held tears now. They fell before his, and she returned the pressure of his hand.

"He loved you too," she whispered.

She had withdrawn her hand and turned away.

The field hospital was evacuated early in the morning of the triumphal entry. Hardy haunted Roshanara while it was going on. He was her Chief of the Staff, she said, with a brave smile, which made his heart leap up. He anticipated her wishes, he saved her every physical exertion; and when the last patient had been placed in the ambulance and the last box of dressings had been bestowed in the motor vans, he drove her himself in a commandeered car to the new hospital.

Her nearness, and the consciousness of his re-

sponsibility for her, for those few minutes at least, had an almost intoxicating effect. Controlling himself, he looked at her from time to time without speaking. Her face looked lovelier than ever in its grief and pallor.

At last he broke the silence.

"I suppose, Princess, you wouldn't care to attend this afternoon's durbar?" he asked.

There was a brief pause.

"I don't see why I shouldn't," she replied. "That is, provided I can get someone to look after my hospital."

"That is splendid," said Hardy. "It occurred to me that if you went you would be thinking of *him*, and that *he* ought to have been taking part in the triumph which he did so much to bring about."

"But *you* will be there," she answered, with one of her old smiles. "And I shall feel somehow that he will be with us; and I know he would have loved me to go."

"Then, Princess, go you shall," he cried eagerly. "I will arrange a seat for you on the dais, and will join you after the march in."

Another pause.

"Princess," said Hardy, turning to her, "I want to tell you how wonderful it seemed to me when you asked the Scottish padré to join in the funeral service. It seemed to me to typify the oneness of true religion as well as the unity of our cause and the disappearance of racial distinctions."

She did not reply at first; and then, looking round at her, he found her eyes full of tears.

"Dear friend," she said at last, "I feel I must tell you what very few people except Bayard, and the clergyman who received me, know—and that is, that I am a Christian. I was received into the Anglican Church at Jehanabad a year ago. I had

long wanted to take this step, but the way didn't seem clear till last year. Bayard, too, was one at heart. It was only his devotion to his duty as a prince which prevented him from making a public profession of Christianity. But, had he lived, and had he been able to entrust the government of the State to someone worthy of it, I feel sure he would have done so later on. That is why I felt I must have a Christian minister to pray at his graveside. And I am happy that you approved, and were touched."

Hardy disengaged one hand from the steering wheel and grasped hers, marvelling at his own temerity.

"It wasn't only I, dear Princess," he replied. "The whole army was touched; and now, to know that you have found the truth—Princess, this is going to be a wonderful thing for all of us—and for India!"

She did not withdraw her hand. She seemed very gentle just then, and a protective yearning came over him.

"Princess"—he hesitated—"Roshanara, I also have something to tell you. Just a day or two before his death your brother gave me a very special charge about you—a charge which means more to me than anything else in the world. I promised him then that I would do my utmost to guard you and protect you if anything happened to him. And I want you to remember that I am at your service whenever and wherever you may require me. So long as you have any use for me you shall command me; and, God helping me, I will never fail you."

She turned and looked at him.

"Thank you, General Hardy," she replied in a low voice. "I have known that all along. I have always felt that I could turn to you in any need, but it means so much to have you tell it to me."

She flushed slightly as she said it. Wild thoughts came to Hardy of putting his fortune to the touch —"to win or lose it all"—but the conventions saved him. He reflected that to propose to a princess when you have undertaken to drive her to a hospital is not done, and he decided, by no means for the first time, to wait.

III.

By the time Delhi was retaken the British army before it numbered at least 70,000 men of all arms, but only 10,000 of them took part in the formal entry. Nearly half of these consisted of representatives of the Calcutta contingent and the allied princes' forces, who had successfully contained the rebels while reinforcements were being mustered. Cavalry played a small part in the pageant, for the reason that there were no regular cavalry regiments on the spot, but it should be added in fairness that the Roughrider cavalry section had done excellent scouting work during the operations, and had stood up to the rebel cavalry often when outnumbered by three to one.

The Roughriders led the march into Delhi, followed by the Imperial Cadet Corps (composed entirely of princes and noblemen), the Naval contingent, the gunners, and regiment after regiment of British infantry, and the Tank Corps. Then came the Imperial Service contingents, headed by Jehanabad, and representing the forces of at least a dozen loyal princes whose States were of sufficient importance to maintain an army. Then the Caledonians, the Cossipore Fencibles, and, last but not least, the Calcutta University battalion. These gallant youngsters had taken their full share in the gruelling which had fallen to the lot of the Allies during the first fortnight before Delhi.

While the Indian army as a whole had played

traitor, thanks to unscrupulous and misleading propaganda, there were faithful Abdiels to be found in every unit, while more than one corps was split in half by the refusal of the loyal element to join in the mutiny. Some of these staunch soldiers had lost their lives, but others had escaped and joined the Calcutta or Bombay contingents, or the British reinforcements which were flung into the country later. These now had their representatives in the victorious army.

Overhead flew the squadrons of what was by this time the most formidable Air Force in Asia. If Bokharistan had by any chance thought better of its first hesitancy and had sent its 500 planes to harass the victors, it would have received the greatest surprise in its history.

A dais had been prepared on the open ground, or what had been open ground, before the site on which had stood the Jumma Musjid. The tragic ruins of that glorious mosque flanked the dais on the right ; the battered walls of Shah Jehan's Fort were on its left. The city lay just as it had been left by the hammerings of war, with all its desolation and gaping wounds. It looked a city of the dead, except for the few thousands of disconsolate citizens fringing the space reserved for the troops. These were drawn up forming three sides of a square, in front of and beside the dais where the last of the Delhi durbars was to be held.

The military procession was brought up by the Commander-in-Chief, his staff, and the generals under him. After them came a group under escort, the sight of which constricted the hearts of all the spectators. It consisted of those members of the rebel Government who had not been executed. They were led by the *soi-disant* Emperor Mahomed Tughlak, and they marched on foot. Sir Bryan Neville had dismissed the suggestion that they

should be manacled; but on the advice of those around him had ordered that they should march on foot as prisoners at the tail end of the triumphal entry.

Years afterwards he was attacked by Labour politicians for his cruel treatment of a beaten enemy; but on the morrow of the surrender of Delhi no one in India or in England—least of all in India—thought of blaming him. These men had both foolishly and wickedly aspired to oust the British and seize upon the reins of Empire. Not a single Indian in his heart of hearts thought them anything but lucky to have got off as cheaply as they did.

Princess Roshanara did not attend the durbar after all. If she had she would have been the only lady present, and upon learning this she remained not unwillingly on duty in the hospital. The dais was unoccupied until the parade had taken up its allotted positions. Then Sir Bryan Neville and his military colleagues mounted it, while the ex-Emperor and the other prisoners stood in a row before them.

IV.

The Union Jack was broken when the Generals had ascended the dais, and the National Anthem was played, while the parade presented arms. In this simple fashion was opened the last Delhi durbar. All the customary ritual was cut out.

Sir Bryan Neville advanced to the front of the dais, the other general officers grouped behind him. He was an imposing figure in his Air-Marshal's uniform, his height increased by his elaborate headdress, his hand on his sword.

The speech which he proceeded to deliver was amplified and broadcast, and was listened to with intense interest over the greater part of the world.

It had the briefest introduction, no peroration, and was as follows :—

" In the name of the King-Emperor I declare that the City and Fort of Delhi have this day been restored to the keeping of the British Government in India. The attempt to overthrow the British Government has failed. Its leaders have either fled or been executed, or are in custody awaiting such punishment as the Government may see fit to pronounce upon them. The soldiers whom they seduced from their allegiance are now prisoners of war, and will be dealt with in due course. The rebels who are still at large will be pursued, if necessary, to the utmost boundaries of India, and will be disarmed and punished. In the name of the Government I hereby declare that any attempt to conceal them or to help them in any way will be treated as treason, and will be punished with death. It is the duty of every subject of His Imperial Majesty to assist the Government in the speedy restoration of law and order. When that has been effected the hand of punishment will be stayed, and the Government will resume its beneficent activities, which have been interrupted by rebellion and mutiny. In the meantime, no loyal subject who shall resume his ordinary avocations and shall avoid all intercourse with His Majesty's enemies has anything to fear from His Majesty's armed forces.

" I have now to announce that His Majesty's Government, after careful consideration, have decided to remove the capital of India from Delhi, and to transfer it once more to Calcutta, its original seat. They have contemplated the possibility of making this change for some time on grounds of general political expediency, but the outbreak of the present rebellion, and the part which Delhi has played in that rebellion, have convinced them that the time has come to put an end to Delhi as the

seat of government. Delhi has proved itself unworthy to be the capital of British India. Its history proves that it is not fitted to be a capital at all. A dozen dynasties have endeavoured to establish it as the centre of a stable government, and the ruins of as many cities, surrounding us on every side. show how completely they have failed in their attempts.

" His Majesty's Government and the Government of India are now constrained to admit that a serious blunder was made when the capital of British India was transferred to this city of ill-omen. The rebellion has afforded them an opportunity of retrieving that blunder. The rebels, and not the Government, have pronounced the doom of Delhi. They have destroyed the New Delhi, which was set up by the side of Old Delhi forty years ago. Our own bombardments have performed the same office for Old Delhi. The Government are now resolved to leave both cities to the desolation which has been wrought upon them by rebellion and war.

" Delhi will cease to exist from to-day as a province, as a capital, even as a municipality. This is the last of its public durbars. When the flag behind me is hauled down, it will disappear from among the living cities of the earth. Only its ruins will remain as a reminder of its crimes."

Sir Bryan Neville ceased speaking, and there followed a pause which might almost have been felt. Then a kind of groan went up from the crowd. The majority understood English, but even in the case of those who did not, no interpreter was needed, as none was, in fact, requisitioned. The vernacular-speaking crowd mentally absorbed the purport of the speech from those of its members who knew English ; they sensed that Delhi had been dethroned, and as most of them had vested interests in the city they realised instantly that this meant partial

or total ruin to themselves. Hence the sigh or moan which went up from thousands of overcharged hearts.

The Commander-in-Chief prolonged the pause, not ill-pleased with the effect which he had produced. Then, raising his shako, he cried in his loudest tones—

"Long live the King-Emperor!"

Sir William Smyth now called for three cheers for His Imperial Majesty, and these were given by the troops with deafening fervour.

The National Anthem was played by the massed bands, Sir Bryan Neville and the officers with him standing at the salute, while the troops presented arms.

As the last note of the anthem died away the Union Jack was hauled down. The Commander-in-Chief and the group surrounding him left the dais. The troops marched back to quarters as the rays of the early setting sun shed a parting glory upon the ruins of the Jumma Musjid, and once again lit up the rose-red walls of the Fort of Shah Jehan.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE.

I.

On a chilly afternoon about the third week in December General Hardy sat in his office in Mian Mir staring at the superscription of a letter which had just been put into his hand. It was an important-looking envelope, stamped "Belvedere" at the back, which was further embellished with three large red wax seals. The address was in the Viceroy's own handwriting, and read as follows :—

"To Brigadier-General
"Sir John Hardy, Bart.,
"Commanding Calcutta Brigade,
"Lahore."

Hardy's brigade had, in fact, been pushed up to Lahore immediately after the reduction of Delhi. The army of which it formed a part had met with practically no resistance, and the regular troops were now traversing the country in every direction, rounding up rebels and clearing away the aftermath of rebellion. Hardy and his men had been left to garrison Lahore, where they seemed doomed to inaction. He had suggested their demobilisation, as enormous reinforcements had arrived, trade was reviving in Calcutta, and naturally the merchants and shopkeepers of whom the brigade was largely composed were anxious to get back to business.

Sir Bryan Neville, however, was immovable; possibly he disliked General Hardy! At all events the Calcutta brigade was kept cooling its heels at Lahore.

After gazing at the letter fixedly for a few minutes, and trying to collect his somewhat bewildered thoughts, Hardy broke the seal, conscious of a heart that beat a trifle faster than its wont. The letter was a holograph from the Viceroy, and this is what Hardy read :—

" Private and Confidential.

" Belvedere, Calcutta,
18 *December* 1957.

" My dear Hardy,—Let me begin by congratulating you upon the honour of a baronetcy of the United Kingdom, which His Imperial Majesty has been pleased to confer upon you, and which this letter will announce to you. No honour with the conferment of which I have ever been associated has afforded me anything like the pleasure which I feel at your brilliant but well-deserved reward. I do not hesitate to declare my conviction that your action last month not only saved Calcutta from massacre, outrage, and possible loss for a time to the British Empire, but, by stampeding the rebels into mutiny a week before the date planned, threw their whole programme into confusion. It deprived them, incidentally, of the heavy reinforcements, both by land and air, which they certainly expected from Bokharistan. What that meant to us is for the historian to say. I myself consider that, backed by Bokharistan, they had a very good chance of seizing the ports, and that would have enabled them to hold off our reinforcements while they made themselves masters of the country. By leading what was technically a rebellion in Bengal you took great risks ; a single false step, and you might not only have ruined the British cause, but might have been tried for high treason. I congratulate myself and the Empire that Calcutta threw up at the critical moment a leader of your

high patriotism, strong character, and strategic ability.

"Nor am I less sensible of the debt we owe to your courageous handling of the situation before Delhi, to the way in which you held on to the Tughlakabad-Kutb line, and to the successful diplomacy which marshalled behind you the Imperial Service contingents under the late Sultan of Jehanabad.

("There he is wrong," muttered Hardy. "Dear old Bayard would have come in anyhow.")

"For all these reasons, my dear Hardy, I am more than delighted to be the first to congratulate you upon the honour which has been bestowed upon you. Long may you live to enjoy it!

"I will confess, however, that my motive in writing to you is not entirely single. I have a request to make which is, as I am sure you will feel, in the nature of a command, since it summons you to new duties, and to an ordeal at least as great as any you have yet had to face.

"The Governorship of Bengal has been vacated by Sir James Bowles, and I want you to take it. This offer is made, of course, on behalf of His Majesty's Government. I may say that I have consulted representatives of every race and class in Calcutta, and there is a remarkable consensus that you are the best man for the post. Its duties will in one sense be simpler than they have been, since the rebellion has flung the constitution into the melting-pot, and has, for the time being, at all events, brought about a return to irresponsible government. At the beginning, therefore, you will not be troubled by a Legislative Council. You will have your Executive Council, of course, which you will be at liberty to choose yourself; and you and they will govern Bengal in such manner as to you seems best, until India has recovered her

balance, and the restoration of a Parliamentary system becomes possible of consideration.

"This change, naturally, has its drawbacks. You will have no body or institution to stand between you and the British Parliament, and you may look to be unmercifully criticised in the native press in India, and in the gutter journals in England. But this position must be shouldered by someone, and as you did not hesitate to assume it under conditions which exposed you to a charge of high treason, I venture to hope you will not shrink from it when it comes to you in the ordinary course of your public duty.

"In fine, my dear Hardy, you are like the profitable servant in the parable, whose reward for doing good work was to be given more and greater work to do. As Governor-General of India, I invite you to stand by me in Bengal; and if I know you, as I think I do, you will not turn down this opportunity of serving your king and country.

"With every expression of esteem and confidence, I am, yours very sincerely,

"QUANTOCK."

"Brig.-Gen. Sir John Hardy, Bart."

II.

Hardy sat looking at the letter for several minutes. The past four weeks had more or less steeled him against surprise, but this had fairly got under his guard. Six weeks ago he had led a rebellion. It was a desperate game, which might easily have destroyed him. Fate had willed otherwise, and to-day he was Governor-Designate of Bengal.

For a moment the thought of the responsibility he had incurred—for refusal was, of course, impossible—overwhelmed him. Why had he mixed

himself up in politics? It was a poor game at the best, and he already knew that at its worst it was utterly sordid. He had been in love with his profession, and had already made enough money to keep him comfortably for the rest of his life. If he could have continued in it he saw himself the possessor of a large fortune, which would have been honestly earned. Now he was roped in as a kind of permanent official—that was, if he made good. If he failed—but he wouldn't think of that.

Failure—Roshanara! Why should his thoughts have passed so rapidly from one to the other? He focussed his love for her in the light of his new preferment. He was now no longer plain John Hardy! He was Sir John, and Governor of Bengal. He came no longer to her empty-handed. He had a satrap's throne to share with her—possibly still higher honours for them both.

He sprang from his seat and began to pace the room. He would go to her at once, and lay his honours at her feet. No, not his honours, when he asked her to marry him. She should take him as plain John Hardy, or not at all. He would not tell her what had happened until—that is if—he knew she loved him. But in the meantime the fact that he was Governor of Bengal gave him the feeling that he was presuming less upon her rank than if he held a humbler post.

He called for Montgomery, and ordered his car. The matter would not wait! Five minutes brought the General to the hospital. It was a straggling building, but he knew his way about it blindfold.

Entering the nurses' recreation room he despatched the only nurse in it with an urgent message for Roshanara. The nurse, who prided herself upon her tact, gave the message, and decided to leave the two a free half-hour for an interview which, her instinct assured her, would be an important one.

Therefore she warned off all the other nurses who were not on duty.

At last, after a wait of what seemed to Hardy to be many hours, the Princess appeared. One glance at his face told her why she had been sent for. Love and pride struggled within her for a moment, and love won. She gave him a heavenly smile, though her heart was beating wildly, and held out her hand without speaking.

Hardy seized both her hands in his and kissed them, while his eyes devoured her face. Strange that the supreme moment of his life should have found him so confident, so masterful! Was it because her eyes fell before his, a soft blush mantled the pale ivory of her face, and he was conscious of the heaving of her bosom?

"Roshanara," he said, "I think you know why I have come to you, and how much I love you. I have longed to tell you so, but haven't dared. But I have come to you now because—well, simply because I can't keep silent any longer. I must know my fate, I must know whether you care for me or not. Do you, Roshanara—can you love me? You are the only woman for me."

Thank God, she did not withdraw her hands! Slowly she lifted her noble head, and the deep eyes beneath their level brows met his. She smiled again—a tremulous smile, but oh, how sweet!

"John, dear," she murmured, "I have always loved you."

He drew her to him, gently but firmly, and then his arms went round her, and rank, race, and all else was forgotten as their lips met, and he was man to her woman.

Bless the nurses! The recreation room might have been out of bounds for the wide berth they gave it. The two happiest people in all the world were left alone while they came to themselves, she with the

loveliest colour tinging her pale cheeks, he showing red through his tan—" celestial, rosy red, love's proper hue."

They sat down and talked, hand in hand.

" John, dear man of mine," said the Princess, " why did you not come to me long before ? "

" Sheer cowardice, my darling," answered her lover. " You were a lady of high degree—the highest in the land. I was a plain esquire, without pretensions or hopes, and I found it difficult to believe that you could care for plain John Hardy."

" But it is just plain John Hardy that I do care for," murmured Roshanara. " Not that you are in the least plain, John. You are the handsomest man I know. And I have always cared for plain John Hardy—and, after all, what are you now but plain John Hardy ? "

" Well, dear, that is where I have a surprise for you," he said, kissing her and bringing out the Viceroy's letter from his pocket. On reading the envelope she caught her breath, and then drew his face down and kissed it.

" John, darling," she cried, " how splendid of you ! And how splendid of them to appreciate you and reward you ! I *am* glad, especially, dear, as you required a stimulus to help you to declare yourself to me ! "

" Thank you, dear. Yes, that was how it worked. It didn't make me any more worthy of you, but it lessened my feeling of presumption in approaching you. But there is more in the letter than appears on the envelope, darling. Shall I read to you—my better half ? "

When he had finished the reading of it she sat quite silent, one hand in his, the other resting on his arm.

" This is most wonderful," she said at last, withdrawing her gaze from vacancy and looking

into his eyes. "Do you see, John, how things are going to work out? You were instrumental in breaking up the bad system which had fastened itself on Bengal, and not on Bengal alone. And now Providence, which shapes our ends, has spoken to you again, and this time you are not to be a destroyer but a builder up. You are going to show how Bengal should be governed—not by the sword, or mere autocracy, but by mutual goodwill and co-operation."

"Yes, dear, and you are going to show me how to do it," he replied, kissing her. "It *is* wonderful, Roshanara. It is the first time in history that an English Governor has been so fortunate as to have an Indian Princess beside him as his wife and helpmeet. I know what you were to your brother, Roshanara. I know you will be the same to me. Together, we will govern Bengal with sympathy, as well as with firmness and understanding. We have been led to each other for this purpose. Our love is going to be no mere selfish happiness. It is going to help a whole nation, first by the example which we shall set of an India and an England which are wholly devoted to each other, and also by the efficiency which love brings to service."

"I knew it," murmured the Princess. "I knew you would feel as I do about it. Oh John, dear, thank God for a man like you."

EPILOGUE

(Extracted from a letter by 2nd Lieut. James Montgomery to Montagu Penfold, Esq., of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law).

. . . And now, Monty, do you see what I mean? If you want incident and variety it is India every time. Look at my experience—mercantile assistant, trooper, orderly corporal, A.D.C. to a General, and lastly, as I have just told you, best man (practically) to a Governor—and all in the space of two months! Incidentally, I have assisted at two rebellions, taking part in the first, and helping to put down the second!

There was really no best man at the wedding—there couldn't be at the wedding of a man like General Hardy, unless it was the General himself. You see, the affair had to be got over fairly quickly, because Hardy had to go down to Bengal as Governor early in the year. Now, obviously, he couldn't get married as Governor—it isn't done—not in India, anyhow. So, as the Princess was entirely on her own (the State people had disowned her on discovering that she was a Christian), and there was no reason why they shouldn't get married at once, they were married just after Christmas in Lahore Cathedral.

Considering the shortness of the notice and the disturbed state of the country, it was a slap-up affair. The Bishop tied the knot, and the bride was given away by Sir Herbert Flint, the Governor of the Punjab, who had managed to survive the revolt, and had known her from childhood. I attended the General (as A.D.C., and not as best man, although, as I paid the bills and looked after things generally, I consider that I was so in effect).

They made a magnificent pair. Hardy is a handsome fellow, with the face of a born leader of men, but I have never seen him looking so distinguished as he did that day. As for the Princess—well, it's no good trying to describe her. But you may take it from me—and I have seen a lot more of the world than you have since we came down—that she was the loveliest and most graceful bride that either of us has ever seen. She wore an Indian costume, all in white and gold, and with her height and carriage she looked superb. She was attended by one of her nurses as bride's-maid. There was a note of fine sincerity about the whole thing which made a deep impression on me and others. An English Governor and an Indian Princess—that is a new method of solving this complicated Indian problem!

All Lahore was there. They passed out of the church under an arch of Roughriders' swords, and after the reception they went off to Cashmere for a week. They have now gone down to Calcutta. I hope to follow them when we are demobbed, though when that will be Heaven only knows. I believe Sir Bryan Neville, the C.-in-C., was as mad as a hatter at having to let Hardy go; but the order came out from home, and he had to.

I wonder how Sir John and the Princess Roshanara Hardy will get on at Government House. They have their work cut out, but if any two people can bring the various classes and races in Bengal together, it is they. For myself, I hope and trust that the rebellion has cleared the air, and that a new era is about to start in India. I shall be able to tell you more about that later on. . . .

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